The Washington Monthly

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The Average Man and Government Subsidies: A $63 Billion Screwing

Russell Baker
James Boyd
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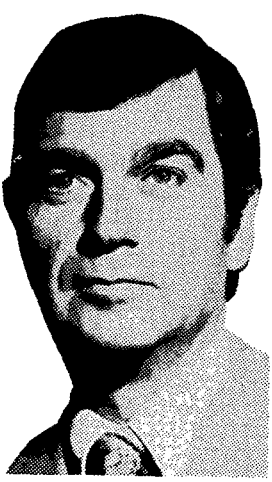

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Letters

The President's Hidden Treasure

The article, "Billions in the White House Basement," [by Timothy Ingram], carried in the January edition of the *Monthly*, was most illuminating and of great assistance during my recent study of withheld funds.

I wish to congratulate you and Mr. Ingram for bringing this situation to the public's eye and noting the grave constitutional questions involved. Over the past several weeks, my staff has conducted an extensive study of the question of withheld funds and discovered that at least $3.5 billion is presently being withheld solely in the Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Agriculture. These funds are expected to be selectively released from January to July in order for the impact to be felt in November. In withholding appropriated funds, this Administration is undercutting the consitutional obligation of Congress, and is depriving the public of its full right to representative, constitutional government.

WILLIAM R. ANDERSON
Washington, D. C.

Mr. Anderson is a U.S. congressman from Tennessee.

The Houses of Muumbi

A wise and melancholy article, "The Houses of Muumbi" by Harold Isaacs, appeared in the December issue of *The Washington Monthly*. In this, Professor Isaacs showed that vast portions of the world were fragmenting into tribal groups, withdrawing into their own cultures and, by the same token, hating or scorning or victimizing members of another tribe or culture. I have known a number of tribes and experienced bloody conflicts between them, so what he wrote reverberated in my mind. But the first memory it recalled was not exotic or dramatic.

At the end of World War II, it may be recalled, it seemed that the world was divided into two vast, mutually hostile camps, the Western dominated by the U. S. and the Communist dominated by the U.S.S.R. Also the Third World came into existence. But it never tried to be monolithic. Instead, the surge towards independence of such miniscule nations as Gambia, Barbados, and Malta suggested a new principle in direct contrast with the immediate post-war tendency: any group possessing a distinctive cultural identity has the right to political autonomy. And it is this new spirit which, when cultural unity has not led to political independence, has occasioned some of the horrors of our age—the slaughter over Biafra, Bangladesh, Southern Sudan, and the like. Even in these awful cases, however, there are elements which make the issues less simple and perhaps less depressing than a straight reversion to primitive savagery. Savages, in fact, if the word may be applied to members of peasant or simple societies, are very

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seldom savage in the sense of violent or cruel. The less complex the social and economic structure the less prevalent is warfare, and where it is practiced (or was—for these societies are dying out) it tends to be of a ritualistic and non-total type.

Parallel to the principles of independence for the small cultural (or, if you like, tribal) groups is a second one which has not been so clearly stated nor so effectively acted on. It is that, whereas all groups have the right to develop their own brand of civilization and political life, they cannot really do so (because many are so small and the world is such a complexly interlocking unity) without relating to other nations in a network of trade pacts, defense treaties, economic arrangements such as Common Markets, and the like. But these things are hard to arrange (as Britain has found in gaining admission to the Common Market) for we have really very little practice in them. They may be harder still to organize among the new countries, where they are all the more necessary. The reason for this is that, having only recently become free, and not always knowing how best to handle their independence, they are loath to make the partial sacrifice of autonomy demanded by membership of an economic or defense community. But if we eventually acquire skill and wisdom in linking independent nations in ways which are of mutual advantage with little loss of internal sovereignty, the world will be a better place.

The destruction and terror in which Bangladesh was born cannot be attributed simply to atavistic communal hatreds. The truth is, (and I worked within Pakistan, East and West, for several years) that Bangladesh was a colony of West Pakistan. For years the Bengali intellectuals had been well aware of the extent of political domination and economic exploitation by the Western, and smaller, wing of the country. When a new political situation gave them the legitimate chance of achieving a greater measure of self rule, the West, fearing the loss of its satrapy, took action in which brutality was only matched by the blundering stupidity which irrevocably lost what gentleness and understanding might have retained. True, this particular intergroup clash had not occurred in Imperial India, but this would have been geographically impossible. It was only the partition arrangement and the subsequent structure of Pakistan which created the possibility, gladly seized by the Punjabis other West Pakistani groups, to exercise profitable domination over East Pakistan. But this was no *tribal* aberration; the same impulse led the French, British, Portuguese and others to control alien populations for their own selfish reasons, and often with a similarly bloody outcome.

The Nigerian Civil War essentially resulted from a power struggle among the three large tribes dominating the three regions into which Nigeria was divided at the time of independence in 1960. (Let me make it clear that the tribe is in fact a nation like most other nations except that it normally does not have a bureaucracy and international standing. But it does have, usually, its own language, religion, laws, social structure, political arrangements, traditions, heroes, etc. In Nigeria each of the three great tribes has a population as large as that of many European nations. But by talking of the Nigerian war as a tribal war we somehow contrive to make it sound irrational and barbaric, conjuring up visions of witch doctors and frenzied war dances, with which no civilized man would have any truck.)

These, and many other horrible struggles, did not take place in the colonial era (others did, though, like the Arab slave trade in East and Central Africa which triggered many conflicts). The reasons are obvious, but we could not possibly be tempted to put the clock back. The colonial system maintained a sort of peace. It did put down inter-tribal wars, it maintained the rule of those local chiefs to whom it delegated authority and since it was the supreme power there was no occasion for various groups (as they later did in Nigeria) to jockey for position. But hatreds, rivalries, and incompatibilities existed. From time to time these broke out in riots and massacres.

This relative stability was maintained by a world-wide system of domination which by definition denied full humanity to nearly three quarters of mankind. This itself was a form of violence, cultural, psychological and economic which indeed often led to overt physical violence. Indeed I would agree with Isaacs that dwelling in the house of Muumbi leads to violence and would claim that the arrogantly racist colonial regimes dwelt more ardently in their houses of Muumbi than most other peoples. But we have nothing to look back upon with nostalgic pride. The modern *Pax Romana* of the colonial nations was but a product of their massive global violence.

In all these issues, as Isaacs rightly points out, the question of identity looms large but mistily. Psychiatrically speaking it would

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seem that the strongest and most resilient people have an identity based upon a measured understanding of their own nature, but most of them also need to feel that they belong to something—nation, tribe, ethnic group, religion, etc.—which confirms and strengthens them and enables them to establish an adequate self-image.

The colonial systems of the world did great damage to the identity of the colonized and indeed continue to do so through subtler methods of economic and cultural control. But there has throughout the world been a contagious awakening to the facts of identity destruction. As a result, we are going through a painful first stage of reconstruction. The cultures and subcultures of the world are asserting themselves angrily, often with unnecessary violence: they are rejecting not only those who have victimized them but also their friends and neighbors. But let us hope that this will pass. This is not saying that the quest for identity should be abandoned, but that it should be completed. It is not knowing oneself that makes individuals aggressive or countries chauvinistic; on the contrary we should beware of human beings and nations plagued by doubts and other uncertainties about themselves and which therefore seek to confirm their strength by oppressing or conquering others.

The dangers of what Professor Isaacs refers to as tribalism are all too real, but this does not mean that we should fear diversity. These dangers have arisen largely because the strong have ignored and abused the diversity of the weak. If the world is to be freed of tyranny it should, on the contrary, be preserved and strengthened. As Lord Acton wrote, "Liberty protects diversity while diversity in turn promotes liberty."

ADAM CURLE
Cambridge, Mass.

Adam Curle is a teacher at Harvard University.

The world is not falling apart into knots of primordial ethnic ties which recognize no other superior loyalties as Harold Isaacs would have us believe. The more than two million Kikuyu people of Kenya whom he cites as an example of ethnic sentiment remain members of an ethnically heterogeneous nation-state which they share with scores of other ethnic groups. In spite of many tensions their plural nation-state is still an active member of the East African Economic Community, one of the most imaginative economic integration schemes anywhere.

The rise and fall of ethnic sentiment has

The State of the Cities

Report of the Commission on the Cities in the '70's

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Foreword by Sol M. Linowitz

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not overwhelmed the many forces moving to make this an ever smaller world. What is happening is that we are devising new institutional forms to cope with ethnic sentiment within plural societies. For instance, while Catholic and Protestant do battle in Northern Ireland, both Ireland and the United Kingdom hover on the verge of entry into the European Economic Community (EEC). Even where secessionist demands are heard, as in Quebec, or Wales, they are coupled with pleas for continued but modified forms of economic association with larger units.

The Soviet Union and the United States represent two ways of keeping together in a single nation-state many, sometimes antagonistic, ethnic groups. The EEC is a limited economic union which may or may not move significantly towards political union. Whatever direction it takes it is actively seeking to acknowledge ethnic loyalties as legitimate and vital in certain spheres while being subordinate in others. Most third world countries are also ethnically plural and few are willing to take the secessionist path towards ethnic homogeneity. The 19th century romantic notion of nationalism based on a common language and ethnic group, e.g. "Hungary for the Hungarians," has been largely superseded.

Instead of moaning that we are retreating into our ethnic shells, what is needed is cogent analysis of conflicts and compatibilities between ethnic and other loyalties, not psychological Muumbi-jumbo.

AARON SEGAL
Brooklyn, New York

Aaron Segal teaches government at Cornell University.

A Mayor Who Went Somewhere

I am astonished by Professor Theodore Lowi's unqualified statement in the January issue, page 59, ["Why New York Mayors Go Nowhere"] that "since 1832 there have been 45 first time nominees for President and 56 for Vice President. Among these were no former big-city mayors. . . ."

Grover Cleveland was Mayor, in 1881, of Buffalo, certainly classifiable then as a big city, third largest in the state after unconsolidated New York and Brooklyn. Contrary to another premise of Professor Lowi, Cleveland was elected governor of New York, and was President in less than five years after his mayoralty at Buffalo.

CLARK KINNAIRD
Flemington, N.J.

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THE SCREWING OF THE AVERAGE MAN:

Government Subsidies: Who Gets the $63 Billion?

Third in a series.

by Taylor Branch

Ever since Teapot Dome, the average man and woman have suspected that there must be a more satisfying way to do business with the government than just paying taxes, and they dream of more lucrative government securities than their W-2 forms. The average man is beginning to reconsider the longstanding public consensus that the corridors of independent business are the best path to riches. To be sure, his actual contact with the authorities still consists primarily of draft notices and Series E savings bonds and license plate lines at city hall, fully in keeping with the grim reputation of the law and its servants. But he has a feeling that there is something more behind the impoverished look of the postman and the tribulations of the policy analyst —something to explain why campaign contributors seem content with their investment even after suffering the skyrocketing costs of a share in a political candidate, and why today's hustler is likely to be a junior pol instead of a junior salesman. He sees through the loopholes and wired contracts only dimly, but every time he sets out into private enterprise to seek a fortune where it is supposed to be, the crosshairs of some farsighted financial instinct intersect over a public coffer. Although he is not quite ready to turn his stockbroker or his time card in for a lobbyist, something in his bones says that the last rainbow has plunged into Washington and that others have beat him to a treasure which he does not yet fully understand.

These inklings of the average man were recently firmed up by solid evidence in a historic study by Senator William Proxmire's Joint

Taylor Branch is an editor of The Washington Monthly.

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Economic Committee. Proxmire's staff man Jerry Jasinowski has been working for more than a year to assemble a compendium of all large government subsidies—all the modern opportunities for the informed person to beat the IRS by taking home more than he sends in. Jasinowski says that his work so far has merely "dented the surface" of money paid to special groups, but his preliminary figures show that more than $63 billion in subsidies flows from the federal government out through particular veins in the economy every year. The discovery of this huge sum—about one fourth of the total federal budget, and growing—promises to have a jolting impact on the way we think of public economics.

Economists have always focused on the broad government policies designed to promote the general economic welfare, as opposed to the more individually tailored benefits which now seem to weigh heavily in the budget. (As economist Carl Shoup told the Proxmire committee, "Federal subsidies are the great fiscal unknown. The federal budget presents no comprehensive summary of subsidies. Most public finance textbooks in the United States either do not even list the word 'subsidy' in their indexes or give only a page or two of reference. There has been no monograph on subsidies in the English language—there are several in German—until the recent work of this committee.") The folklore of capitalism has apparently wiped the idea of a government handout from the minds of economic scholars, but the Proxmire study may one day be looked back upon as a declaration both of *de facto* socialism and of a fundamentally inequitable formula for socialist distribution.

Rising Bribes and Subsidy's Cousins

The Joint Economic Committee defines a subsidy as any government financial assistance aimed at inducing particular private groups to alter their behavior in the marketplace, and the value of the subsidy is that portion which is "undeserved" by the harsh standards of private enterprise.

Subsidies can take the form of direct cash payments, such as a $5 million bonus for dairymen and beekeepers meted out by the Agriculture Department. There are also "back door" tax subsidies, such as a $55 million boost for companies that operate primarily in Latin America or the $1.5 billion depletion allowance for the oilmen and their mineral colleagues. There are all kinds of credit subsidies, such as the $179 million Rural Electrification program, which has been putting up telephone poles out in the country since the Depression. Finally, the government provides "benefit-in-kind" subsidies by buying and selling goods and services on more favorable terms than the customers could find on the market. If you know how to tickle the right places in the Agriculture Department, for example, you may get the government to build a lake on your land at far less than cost under the $78 million Watershed Works of Improvement program.

The volume of payoffs in the Proxmire study becomes even more remarkable when you consider the sums that the Joint Economic Committee has omitted for various reasons. The survey does not include outright welfare payments and transfer payments, such as the $9 billion federal share of public assistance and all of Social Security. "We want to be able to distinguish between government assistance that is ostensibly buying something for the money, as with a subsidy," explains Jasinowski, "and welfare payments that are only meant to improve the living standard of the poor or disabled. The two should be evaluated somewhat differently: the subsidy is successful if it gets the market performance it bargained for as cheaply as possible, whereas a welfare payment is successful if it efficiently redistributes income to the poor. Of course, a subsidy program that yields no return

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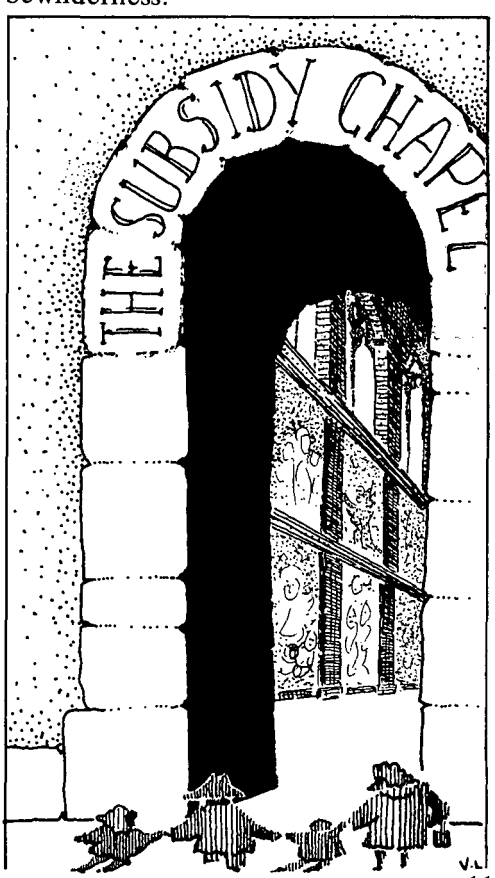
to the taxpayers may in effect only be transferring income to the wealthy, in which case we have a welfare payment to the rich." If welfare payments are defined out of the study, others are abandoned because of measuring difficulties. For example, the $63 billion does not account for waste, a comprehensive program by which the government pays more than it should (often intentionally) for items like weapons systems and operations research analysts. Nor does it include a wide range of what Jasinowski calls "regulatory subsidies," such as trade restrictions, licensing policies, and industry regulation—most of which amount to indirect payments from consumers and taxpayers to special groups. The oil import quota system alone is estimated to place about 5 billion regulatory dollars in the accounts of the petroleum industry each year. When you add waste and welfare and quotas and pensions to the at least $63 billion uncovered thus far in intentional subsidies, it is safe to conclude that the federal government had its discretionary teeth deep into the little fibers of the economy long before the wage-price controls.

Of course, it is no news to discover that the government plays a large role in the economy—ever since President Kennedy had to roll out the nukes and the space ships to achieve prosperity, the private economy has seemed lame in spots. But the new, vitally important contribution of the Proxmire effort is that it will begin to show in detail exactly *how* the budget affects people in all their individuality.

That is where the average man should perk up, for he can use the preliminary Proxmire findings to calculate that his interests are not uppermost in the minds of those who design subsidies. For every one of those controversial programs that give alms to the poor or to him, it turns out there are several that grant blessings primarily to those with incomes above the $10,000 median citizen. Although high incomes are supposed to make people bribe-proof and relatively. immune to material weaknesses (as is frequently asserted by congressmen who want their salaries raised), this principle has not yet drifted out into the population at large, where bribes, like champagne, remove scruples in proportion to the amount of the luxury consumed. The average man, having learned not to expect decent, honest treatment from any association of professionals and degreeholders (that he is not a member of), having realized that truly remunerative work is one part show business and two parts terminology, and having divined that complaints about problems like unsanitary food only bring a diet of more chemicals, is now confronted with documentary evidence that he is being screwed by the government buck. Like hot air, the federal dollar floats upward, attracted by large buildings, as the average man contemplates from the bewilderness.



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The Food Transfusion

As he scrutinizes the Proxmire report, the average man's mind may dwell on all the reminders of subsidies that he encounters in his day. His contact with subsidy programs begins early in the morning when he is likely to eat a Wheatie, and thus becomes acquainted with an agricultural subsidy structure that the study puts at $5 billion a year. (The Nixon Administration plans to increase this figure by about $700 million next year.) In addition to these payments, federal crop limitations have the effect of raising all crop prices about 15 per cent above the market level. This costs people who don't grow their own food about $4.5 billion annually—so that the combined payment and control programs for agriculture take about $10 billion to the farm every year.

Economist Charles Schultze, former budget director under President Johnson, has completed perhaps the first precise measurement of the effects of this $10 billion on the distribution of farm income. He shows that the wealthiest seven per cent of farm families receive federal benefits averaging $14,000 apiece (raising their net farm income from $13,400 to $27,500), while the poorest 40 per cent receive an average benefit of $300 (boosting them to a net farm income of $1,100.) Schultze also calculates that the poorer half of the farm population receives 9.1 per cent of the total federal subsidy, while the wealthiest 19 per cent takes home 62.8 per cent of the federal money.

The average man may have trouble with his breakfast as he ponders the figures. His government is selecting the richest farmers, with market incomes already above his own, and writing checks to double their pay up to $27,500. Thus, Uncle Sam places these farmers in the top five per cent of families by income in the United States. (In 1970, only six per cent of all families had total money earnings greater than $25,000.) Meanwhile, the small farmer—for whose protection the entire system was ostensibly designed—receives only miniscule tribute. The arrangement appears especially senseless when one reflects that the government could take the $5 billion in direct payments alone and distribute an income floor of $3,000 to the smallest 1.8 million farmers who comprise 60 per cent of the total. Food prices would fall an average of 15 per cent without the government production controls, and the benefits of this $4 billion saving would accrue most heavily to the poor because people spend a declining fraction of the family budget on food as income grows. The abolition of price supports would be like repealing a 15 per cent sales tax on food—a tax now collected basically according to the need to eat and distributed to farmers according to their volume of production.

A Boost for Key Biscayne

After breakfast, the average man may pause on his doormat to consider the $8.425 billion in housing subsidies that staff man Jasinowski has unearthed. Congress has been passing laws since 1949 declaring universally adequate housing to be a national goal, and most people, supporting this endeavor, have been distressed that an invisible wrecking ball has laughed at the effort. From the plans of every low-income unit and public housing formula has mushroomed a high rise, from every model city a shopping center, until the unhoused poor fear urban renewal more than they fear the landlord. But at least the generous citizen feels a murmur of warmth because the purpose has been noble and the subsidies aimed at those who need them.

The oldest housing subsidies, however, may have escaped his attention: the federal income tax deduction for property taxes and mortgage interest payments, two stimulants for homeownership hidden in the tax laws. The distributive effects of these subsidies, which are available only to those who itemize deductions, have been pointed

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out repeatedly by former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Stanley S. Surrey. In 1968, Surrey succeeded in persuading the Treasury to begin publishing an annual compendium of "tax expenditures," reasoning that all deductions and exemptions are equivalent to direct government appropriations and should be evaluated in the budget as if the taxes had been collected and then paid out to the beneficiaries of the tax breaks. Surrey's demystification of the mortgage interest deduction, for example, shows how the current program would be designed if it were transferred over to the Department of Housing and Urban Development:

- for a couple making more than $200,000 a year, HUD pays the bank about $9,800 of the mortgage interest payments on their $200,000 home.
- for a couple making $25,000 a year, HUD pays $1,000 of the interest payments on their $50,000 home.
- for a couple making $10,000 a year, HUD pays the bank $350 of the interest on their $25,000 home.
- for a couple too poor to pay income tax, HUD pays nothing to the bank at all, leaving the couple to talk things over with the loan officer.

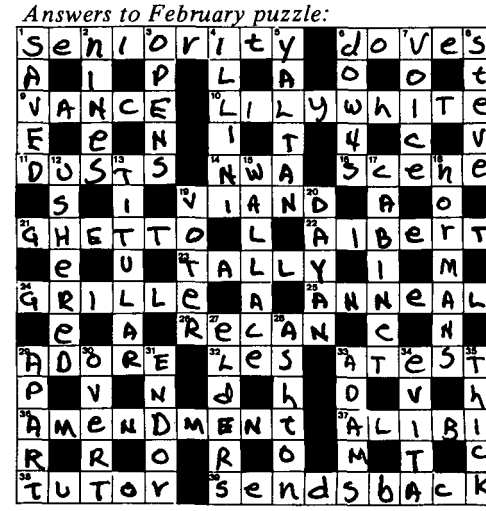
The same formula now applies to all property taxes: the federal government pays 70 per cent of local taxes and interest payments for the rich, 20 per cent for the average man, and nothing for the poor.

If itemizing homeowners are increasingly pleased with this law as their incomes rise and their houses expand, so are the bankers. The Treasury's generous underwriting of borrowing costs increases the demand for bank money, drives up the interest rate, and generally increases the return to capital in the economy.

The property tax and mortgage interest deductions cost $5.4-5.7 billion annually, as calculated by Jasinowski and the Treasury Department. Treasury estimates indicate that about 70 per cent of the tax assistance goes to families with incomes greater than the average man's $10,000. *And these two tax subsidies give away more housing money every year than all the grand housing laws of the last twenty years combined.*

Although the distributive effects of these tax subsidies may deflate the average man's pride in the public crusade for universally adequate shelter, he may still applaud the objective that was in mind when the subsidies were created, namely, to increase homeownership. But the payments are grossly inefficient because they fail to concentrate benefits on those people who would *not* own a home if their subsidy were a bit smaller and on those who *would* own a home if their subsidy were a bit larger. Instead of pinpointing assistance for those who are in need of shelter, the program now gives far more help to those in need of a winter home in Key Biscayne or even a third hideaway in San Clemente--more for a sitting room than for a furnace, more for an orchid greenhouse than for indoor plumbing. By conferring the vast preponderance of assistance on people who are of such means that they would own their homes regardless of tax breaks, these subsidies operate so little toward increasing the number of homeowners that they are essentially welfare payments, distributed--like White House invitations--inversely according to need.

Answers to February puzzle:



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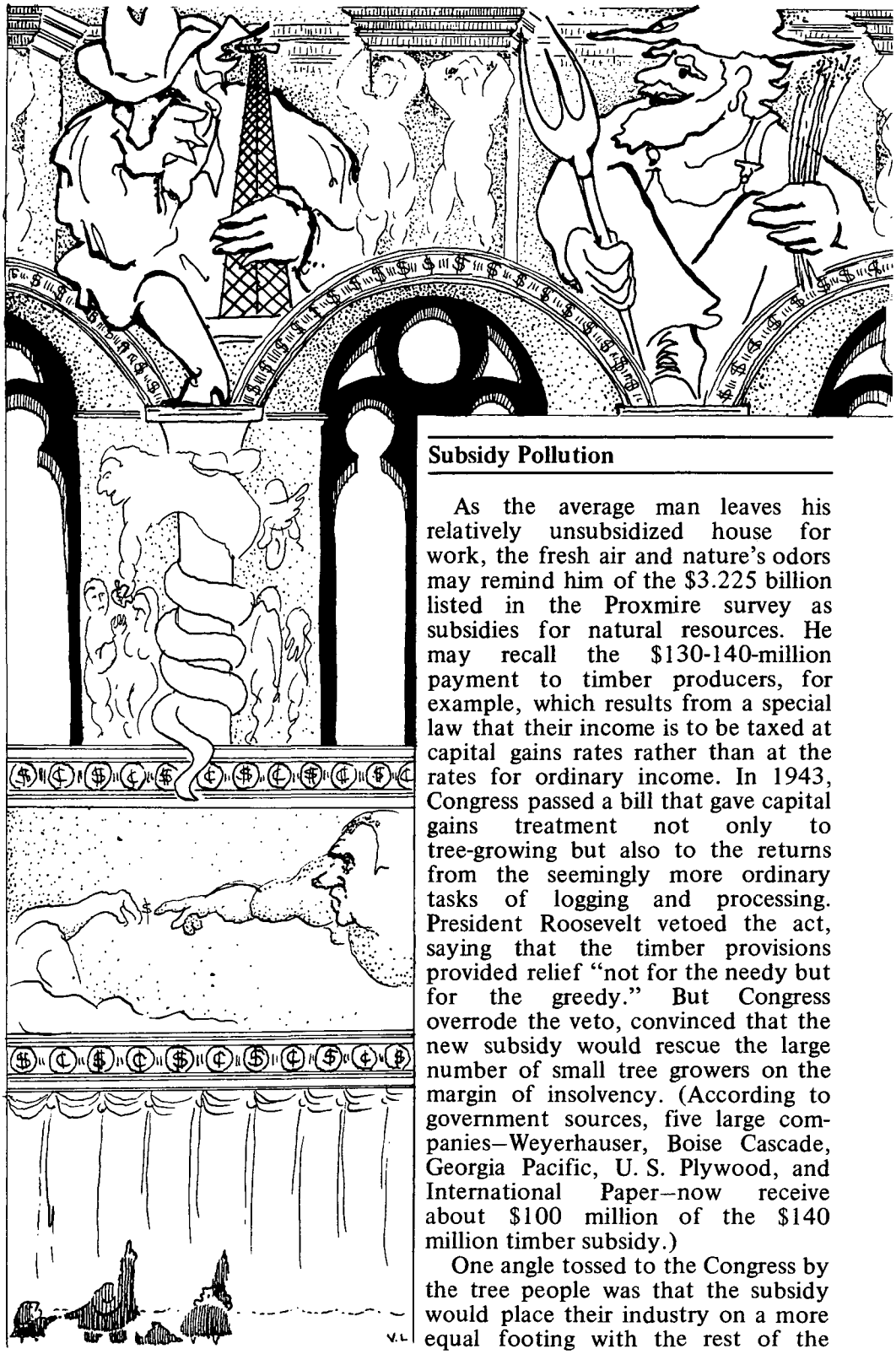

Subsidy Pollution

As the average man leaves his relatively unsubsidized house for work, the fresh air and nature's odors may remind him of the $3.225 billion listed in the Proxmire survey as subsidies for natural resources. He may recall the $130-140-million payment to timber producers, for example, which results from a special law that their income is to be taxed at capital gains rates rather than at the rates for ordinary income. In 1943, Congress passed a bill that gave capital gains treatment not only to tree-growing but also to the returns from the seemingly more ordinary tasks of logging and processing. President Roosevelt vetoed the act, saying that the timber provisions provided relief "not for the needy but for the greedy." But Congress overrode the veto, convinced that the new subsidy would rescue the large number of small tree growers on the margin of insolvency. (According to government sources, five large companies—Weyerhauser, Boise Cascade, Georgia Pacific, U. S. Plywood, and International Paper—now receive about $100 million of the $140 million timber subsidy.)

One angle tossed to the Congress by the tree people was that the subsidy would place their industry on a more equal footing with the rest of the

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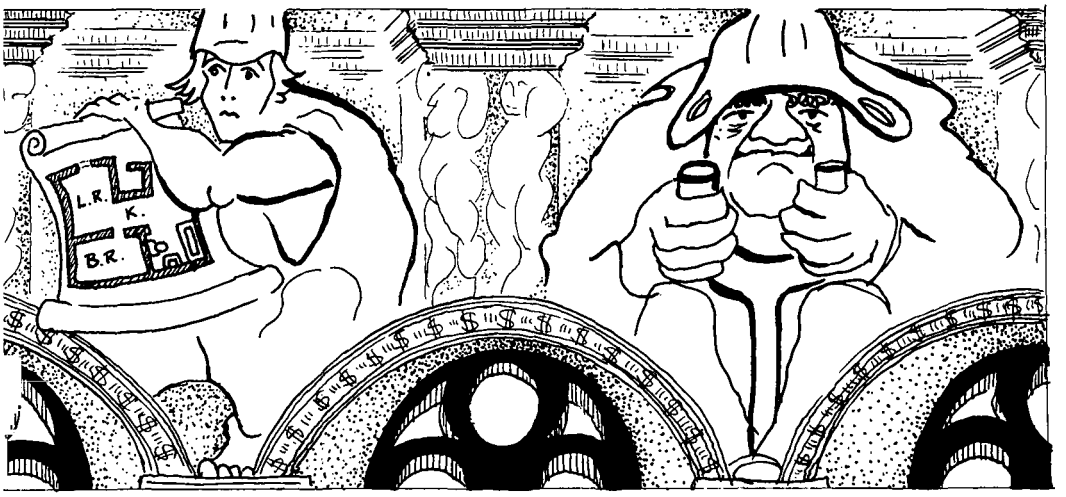

natural resources field, which was enjoying the percentage depletion allowance. This curiously named tax advantage allows the processors of natural resources to deduct, rather than depreciate, their capital costs. In addition, they can deduct a percentage of their revenues instead of their actual investment costs, which usually means that they deduct more costs than they have. The U. S. Treasury estimates the annual subsidy value of percentage depletion as approximately $1 billion. Percentage depletion has been added to so many mineral products—like ball and sagger clay—that it is easier to specify what is excluded than what is depleted. The law itself rules out "soil, sod, dirt, turf, water, mosses, minerals from sea water, the air, or similar inexhaustible sources."

While the tree subsidy and the depletion allowance may hurt the environment by stimulating faster use of natural resources, a few smaller subsidies work in the opposite direction by encouraging people to clean up. The only water pollution subsidy given private polluters by the federal government is a provision in the 1969 Tax Reform Act allowing rapid depreciation schedules for investments to clean up the environment, costing $15 million a year. Two tax lawyers at Boston University have recently shown that the distributive effects of this measure lean, as usual, toward high finance. The subsidy means that the average corporation that purchases a $150,000 certified pollution control facility will receive a direct government payment of:

- $11,952, if company profits are above $25,000,
- $5,479, if company profits are betwen $0 and $25,000,
- $0, if the company has no profits, or a loss,
- $0, if the company spends its pollution control money on measures that involve no capital expense, such as using low-sulfur fuel.

The subsidy operates on three principles: that the costs of pollution control are to be borne by the public rather than by the producers and consumers of the product, that a capital investment is to be favored over all other forms of control, and that the companies which need assistance the least will get the most. Senator Albert Gore tried to eliminate accelerated depreciation on the floor of the Senate, arguing that its distributive effects were intolerable, but he lost decisively after Senator Muskie stated that "this tax relief is only a stimulative to industry to make the investments called for by air and water quality standards." Gore said that industry may need stimulating and pollution certainly needs controlling, but that the Senate and the public could no longer afford to let a

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worthwhile purpose blind them to the outrageous impact of some government actions on the distribution of income.

The Sailor's Scotch Highball

The average man, perhaps a bit groggy from the more than $20 billion in upward-bound subsidies he has already encountered, may think about travel subsidies while riding to work. He will have an ample selection, since the Proxmire study has already uncovered $1.231 billion in annual transportation subsidies. Much of this money is new, such as $270 million in mass transit subsidies, so that its distributional effects are not yet known. But the $482 million to the maritime industry has effects that have been roughly measured.

The federal government pays $224 million each year to some 14 shipping companies to cover the entire wage differential between the earnings of an American merchant seaman and a foreign one. In other words, the companies pay Japanese wages out of their own pockets, and the taxpayers make up the difference to cover the seaman's living, which one source from the Maritime Administration estimated at $16-30,000 a year. Needless to say, there is little incentive for the companies to hold down wages, since the government picks up the tab. The result is that each seafaring job is subsidized approximately $12,000.

The government also pays $238 million a year to subsidize the construction of ships for the merchant marine, a curious program resting on arguments of military necessity (but not included in the military budget). About 13,000 workers in the industry are subsidized an average of $8,000 apiece by the construction payments. Finally, $250 million of indirect, "ship American" payments that are not yet included in the Proxmire study bring the total maritime payoff to more than $700 million each year.

Access to these $700 million in government benefits is carefully protected for the few companies that have always been enrolled, and these companies present a united front to the government in alliance with the three major seafaring unions. As Joseph Albright has written in *Newsday*, the maritime subsidies have been repudiated on national defense, welfare, and balance of payments grounds—leaving the merchant marine's government income floating on tradition, sentiment, and one of the most politically potent lobbies in Washington. Of the Seafarers' International Union, Albright writes that "although it represents only 20,000 jobs, the Seafarers' Union's political kitty is bigger than that of any other union in America and four times as big as that of the million-member United Steelworkers Union of America." The maritime unions dole out more than $1 million each election to members of Congress, who are moved to nautical hyperbole in approving appropriations each summer and who are always trying to increase the subsidy. The companies, which don't miss out on the federal benefits, throw in some contributions, too, and the result is a tiny, well-knit lobby with almost nuclear powers per man. Albright quotes former Maritime Administrator Nicholas Johnson's appraisal of its achievement: "They have succeeded in getting congressional authorization for a pipeline into Fort Knox from which they are all sucking gold. With laws like that, you don't need to be dishonest."

The costs of this gold drain don't seem like much when you think of the contributions as spread out among every single person in the country, as former Maritime Administrator Emory S. Land told Albright: "The operating differential subsidy, per capita, amounts to the cost of one scotch highball. The construction differential subsidy may amount to the cost of one bottle of beer. It seems to me we might relinquish two libations per annum and support a proper shipbuilding industry and a

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prosperous U. S. merchant marine."

The average man is attracted to the image of the subsidy programs as a kind of round-robin highball, but it seems that friendly libations go only to those who have earned them through conscientious lobbying, and that he serves only as a credit card for many mutual kindnesses among his betters. With dry lips, he may reflect on some of the smaller maritime subsidies, such as the free medical care the federal government has given all merchant seamen since President John Adams pushed the program through Congress in 1798.

Taking Your Medicine

The average man cannot enter his doctor's office with the financial nonchalance of a sailor, and he may be reminded that the Proxmire study has recorded $9.406 billion a year in subsidies to medicine (roughly 6.25 billion scotch highballs). Health, like adequate housing, is a national goal, and any distortions of the private medical market should be aimed at providing care to those people who otherwise would not have it. The health system, of course, is a disaster, but Proxmire's work shows that what federal help there is tends to go to the right people, with some exceptions.

Medicaid (health assistance for the poor) and Medicare (for the aged) have subsidy costs of $3.110 billion and $2.070 billion a year, respectively, taking up the majority of health subsidies. Both are financed by non-progressive taxes, but the benefits of the programs are so progressively distributed that they are, on balance, pro-poor and pro-old people. In 1966-67, the average Medicaid patient received $34 in care for every dollar he paid into the program. In the same period, the average Medicare recipient got $3.40 in care on the dollar.

While Medicaid remains triumphantly pro-poor regardless of the scrutiny directed at it, Medicare withers a bit. A recent study by economists Bruce Stuart and Lee Bair shows that when benefits are discounted by care forfeited from other programs and by administrative charges, Medicare patients receive almost no subsidy at all.

After the medical asistance programs, the largest federal health subsidies arise from the tax deductions allowed for medical expenses and medical insurance programs, totaling $3.150 billion annually. Because these programs include some progressive limitations—only the first $150 in insurance premiums and expenses above three per cent of income may be deducted—they have long been considered relatively even-handed, as a boost to medical care without problems for the public conscience. At last, it seems that a subsidy may be designed to aid those who need care most based on their ability to pay—and that there may be a subsidy to help the average man with his medical bills. Preliminary estimates from the Treasury Department, however, show that the government pays about $23 of the average man's doctor bills through the tax system, while paying $110-150 for people with incomes above $50,000 and only about $1.50 a year for the poor. Since these figures are smoothed out by all the people who don't get sick, they indicate that a person with a major medical expense will get no help from the tax system if he is poor, and that a wealthy person will receive four to six times the assistance meted out to the average man. The average man may get a share, but for those on either side of him the tax law says that we value a summer rest in Florida (travel expenses deductible, if prescribed) more than the poor person's chest x-ray. The regressive impact of the tax deductions more than offsets the net progressive gain from Medicare.

The Treasury Department has estimates for the income distribution effects of tax subsidies, such as the medical ones, but they have not been released to the public, nor are they available upon request. After refusing to supply the numbers as a matter of

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policy, one Treasury official was asked how his superiors would respond to an official Freedom of Information request for them. "I suppose they'd probably say that 'satisfactory figures are not now available,' " he replied candidly. "If you were the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, you might get them, but it still might take a long time."

It's Better than Working

If the distribution of benefits from the medical tax subsidies foreshadows all the other tax expenditures, the Treasury has good reason for withholding the estimates. The unequal benefits of the $19.388 billion on subsidies for commerce might be hard for any Administration to live with. Secretary Connally's reticence with the figures may be futile, however, because economists Joseph Pechman and Benjamin Okner have produced reliable estimates from the large sample of tax returns at the Brookings Institution. The Pechman-Okner study, commissioned by the Joint Economic Committee, shows that the largest subsidy for commerce comes from the special tax treatment given capital gains, which may be viewed as a $13.708 billion payment from the Commerce Department directly to stock traders, astute investors, and others who can keep Wall Street paper floating above par for six months and a day.

The recipients of capital gains get a bonus on their take-home pay—above the spending money they would get if their check came from hourly earnings at an auto shop instead of appreciation in Ford stock. This bonus comes to $12,320 *a week* if they are millionaires. Those making $500,000 to $1 million get extra weekly grocery money of $3,173, a figure 30 per cent greater than the amount being bandied about as a yearly guaranteed annual income for the poor. Those making $100,000 to $500,000 get only $435 each Saturday, and the benefits trail off from there down to the average man's compensation of 17 to 46 cents per week. Although the average man's weekly check would nearly be exceeded by the postal charges required to mail it, many common citizens applaud the capital gains provisions as a compliment to their investment genius and as at least a little something to help with the bills—eyes riveted on the quarter flowing into the left pocket while a buck is extracted from the right one to reward the holders of high-volume capital. Such self-interest must sustain the capital gains tax subsidy alone, because the consensus among economists is that the public as a whole receives few extra benefits from capital gains treatment and would not suffer if they were taxed like ordinary income. In other words, special tax advantages are not needed to induce people to make money through investments instead of through work. (This view holds as long as certain measures that encourage investment risks, such as the deductibility of capital losses, remain in force.)

In the Revenue Act of 1971, President Nixon pushed through his proposals for adding the largest single boost to the parade of commerce subsidies in more than 40 years—$6 billion a year in tax credits and accelerated depreciation for corporations, which amounted to a 10 per cent cut in corporate taxes. The average man will reflect that these two gifts will be granted to companies in accordance with how much they do not need them, like the write-offs for pollution equipment. The corner dry cleaner and small manufacturer will probably get nothing, but General Motors will get a great deal—both absolutely and in proportion to its income. The Investment Tax Credit was repealed on President Nixon's recommendation in 1969, because, as he explained, 15 per cent of plant capacity was then idle and the companies needed demand, not new investment. Besides, there has been no

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economic evidence that the credit significantly increases national output. Nevertheless, in 1971, when the percentage of idle plant equipment had nearly doubled to 28 per cent, the President changed the name of the tax credit to Job Development Credit and passed a measure to throw money at the wealthiest corporations as an incentive for them to buy even more equipment. It was an idea worthy of the Sheriff of Nottingham.

Learning by Payoff

By the time the average man gets home from work, he may decide that he needs more education to earn a subsidy in an economy that requres some skill and a little clout to get a fiscal handshake. He will then eyeball the $3.574 billion of education subsidies in the Proxmire study.

Most federal education subsidies fall short of the required-for-education criterion, but not nearly as regressively as some programs the average man has encountered while thinking about the Proxmire study. The $300 million subsidy value of national defense and guaranteed student loans, for example, is distributed almost evenly among the population—with the richest quarter receiving a bit more than the poorest quarter. This indicates that there are some wealthy students receiving subsidies who would remain in school without them, in which case the federal money reduces their costs but does not add to the total amount of education received. On the other hand, there are some poorer students for whom the absence of a subsidy is the only factor keeping them out of the university. Thus, the country could increase the overall amount of education received by the young simply through a redistribution of subsidies so that they hit where they are most critical.

Some federal programs are more regressive than the loans, such as the $500 million paid out through the additional personal exemption for students—which gives money according to income and thus is a kind of special reward for wealthy parents who educate their children. The $164-million cash payment for Higher Education Work Study is hailed as a very progressive measure, since all the money goes to poor students, whom the government pays to do chores around the campus. The poor students like the program because it guarantees them a way to work through college, but they are not the prime beneficiaries. Essentially, the federal government is bribing the universities to let poor *students*, rather than ordinary workers, perform the menial tasks of operation. The money saved by the university on labor costs can be applied to lowering overall operating expenses, or lowering student fees. Thus, the university gets full tuition from all students, the poor students get a trifling wage for their labor, and the non-poor students come out as the real something-for-nothing beneficiaries by getting a government-sponsored reduction in charges. The amount of money in the program is so small that it is not a monstrous outrage, or even necessarily a bad program, but a close look does show how some efforts that are passed off as "aid to the needy" are not what they seem.

The regressive features of federal grants to public universities are mirrored in state systems, where most of the educational benefits go to wealthier people. Since state taxpayers subsidize about one third of university tuition costs from revenues collected on a roughly proportional basis in most states, and since the child of a wealthy parent is more than three times as likely to enroll in a state university as a child of a poor parent, the benefits of state higher education are distributed about like those from the medical deductions, angling upward. A study of California education by economists Lee Hansen and Burton Weisbrod shows that families with children in the University of California have higher incomes than families with children at the

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California state and junior colleges. The university families receive a subsidy of $1,700 a year, while paying a total of $910 in all state and local taxes, for a net gain of $790. The poorer families with children in the poorer quality state and junior colleges also receive a net subsidy over taxes, although a much smaller one. Families without children in state higher education pay the costs. The paying families have a lower average income than the receivers, and they in effect subsidize the families of the students—giving progressively more subsidy to the families with higher incomes and with children in the higher quality institutions. The California system is widely hailed as progressive and pro-education because the state pays almost all college fees for its students, but the Hansen-Weisbrod analysis shows why the large public contributions to higher education are not necessarily equitable, much less a boon to the poor.

According to Brookings economist Robert Hartman, the state of Ohio has recently enacted a plan for financing state higher education that would do two things. First, it would provide loans to all students who want them and who qualify for state universities. Second, it would require that all instructional subsidies be paid back to the state. The repayment is a small percentage of the student's income, beginning only when and if income reaches $7,500 per year and increasing in mildly progressive steps for higher incomes. Hartman writes that "on pure equity grounds it would be hard to beat this proposal," but the executive director of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities called the Ohio Plan "a reversal of what public higher education has stood for for more than 100 years."

Treasury Welfare

The average man who takes a mental stroll through the Proxmire study is perplexed by all the subsidies and income redistribution he sees whirling around him. He sees money being taken from most people and given to the oilmen and to ball and sagger clay, from single people and childless couples to the parents of school children, from jobholders to the Job Development Credit, from the poor to rich farmers, from the payroll tax to Medicare, and from everyone to the capital gain. He sees the regressive Social Security tax rising several billion dollars a year so that it may catch the Pentagon budget in a year or two, while corporate taxes fall by $6 billion of new subsidies in a single year. He finds that the effective tax rate for all the federal assessments ranges from 25.6 per cent for the very poor to 29.9 per cent for the average man to 33.6 per cent for those making 25 to 50 grand, and that in the United States the distribution of income is not noticeably different after taxes than it is before them. He concludes, in short, that a nose for subsidies is second only to the possession of a degree as an asset in finding a soft job, that the economy breathes, floats, and circulates prestige based on bonuses paid from the grand central subsidy of the Congress, and that one of the chief incentives for a person to become rich must be to get the inside track on a wide variety of relatively free subsidies—an inside track that the average man appreciates by running his counting finger over the Proxmire ledger.

On his journey through the subsidy galaxy, one might form several notions about public bribes that deserve some thought during TV commercials. The first one is that anyone who receives an incentive payment to accomplish some social objective should be accountable for how well he spends the taxpayers' money. The oil industry, for example, should not be allowed to take federal dollars as a subsidy for domestic exploration and then refuse, as a private enterprise, to provide access to records that are needed to determine whether the public is getting its money's worth in

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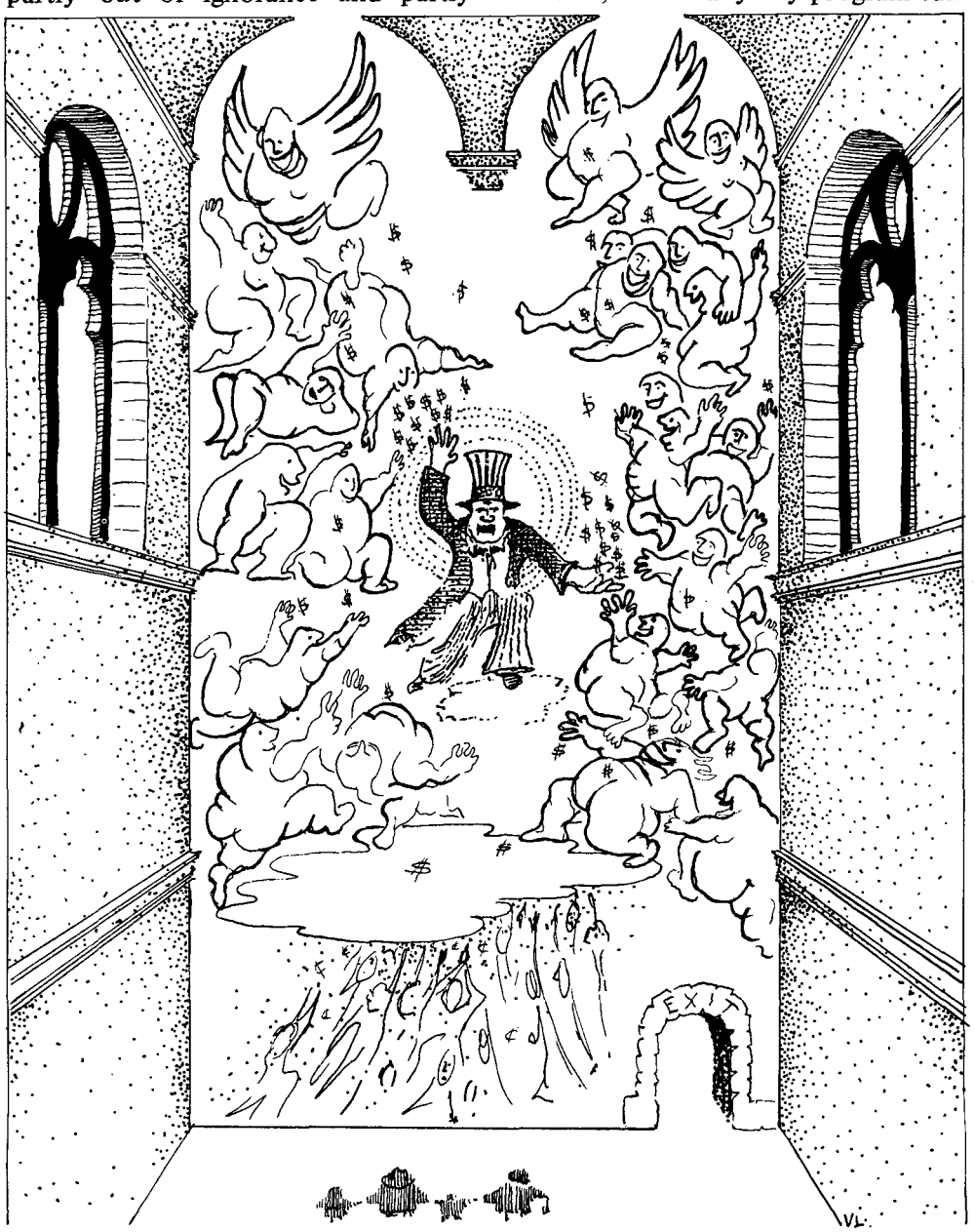
new oil.

Of course, the government itself has not made much of an effort to measure the effectiveness of all the subsidies that have accumulated piecemeal over the years—how much new housing is produced by the housing subsidies, how many small farmers get substantial aid under the farm programs, and so on. This vital service to the citizenry has been overlooked partly out of ignorance and partly because so many of the subsidies are concealed in the tax laws, where the substantive committees of Congress and the responsible agencies of the Executive branch never see them. Normal education appropriations must pass through the education and appropriations committees each year, where they can be scrutinized and criticized and adjusted. But if the same measures are rewritten as tax subsidies, as virtually any program can



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be, the education committees and HEW will never have authority over them, and may not even see the bill as it passes through the Treasury and the Senate Finance Committee and Wilbur Mills. And the tax subsidies are almost always permanent, handed out through the Treasury every year regardless of performance.

Tax subsidies suffer the additional fault of falling under Stanley Surrey's maxim that "the wealthier the individual the greater his assistance under the program," so that even a justified subsidy is likely to be a disaster for the average man if it is designed by the Treasury. The laws are not only written to favor the wealthy, but they are often so complicated that maximum rewards go to those who can hire a lawyer to gain a toehold over the tax digest, leaving the average man, as usual, screwed by the abstruse.

To the extent that they transfer money without pushing behavior toward the stated subsidy goals, tax subsidies are equivalent to welfare payments. Author Philip Stern, among others, testified before the Joint Economic Committee that the welfare content is preponderant, after confessing that his own private fortune enabled him to evaluate tax breaks quite closely. Stern testified, using Brookings Institution figures, that the weekly welfare check from all tax subsidies, including pro-poor ones like the tax exemption for welfare and Social Security income, is graduated far more steeply than the federal income tax: $.31 a week to the poor; $12.52 to those earning $10,000-15,000; $229.07 to those earning $50-100,000; and $13,854.78 to millionaires.

Joseph Pechman and Benjamin Okner have calculated from IRS returns that $77 billion in federal revenues would be recovered by canceling all the tax subsidies and returning to a flat progressive income tax with no preferences. To stay at current levels of government expenditure, this $77 billion would permit an overall tax cut of about 50 per cent—reducing the rate to seven per cent at the lowest taxable level and 43 per cent at the highest. This would still leave substantial subsidies of other kinds in need of evaluation, but it would end the longstanding travesty of huge gaps between nominal and effective rates at the higher levels.

Knighthood in the Closet

A second notion that strikes the average man on perusing the Proxmire report is that programs to supplement the income of the little person tend to get subverted unless they are tied only to his income and not to his occupation. Thus, our sympathy for the little farmer lines the pockets of large corporate farmers, and the rescue mission for the little tree-grower winds up mainly as a transfusion for the five largest timber companies in the country. And the Pechman-Okner report reveals that federal transfer payments—social security, railroad retirement, welfare, workmen's compensation, unemployment benefits, and veteran's disability compensation—give $7 billion more in supplements to people with incomes above $10,000 than below. The startling fact is that people who make below $5,000 receive $296 per person from such income maintenance payments, while those making $25-50,000 get $1,146 per person, or nearly three times as much.

If Congress wants to help people because of their hardship—that is, if it is more concerned with the recipients of the money than with accomplishing some broad social goal—it makes a great mistake by not transferring the money directly to the recipients based on their low income alone. The negative income tax is the most efficient way to do so, for it provides income supplements without loopholes for the big timber companies to sneak through. The average man is blamed for blocking the negative income tax, as more enlightened

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citizens bemoan his bigotry and Draconian social values. National polls show, however, that more average people support a guaranteed annual income than do people in higher brackets. More than 80 per cent of the five to 10 granders, the lower ranks of the average man, support a guaranteed job at the minimum wage for all capable people willing to work. This would cost $21 billion in wages for nine million workers, according to the Urban Institute, a poverty think tank that compiles comprehensive statistics on income maintenance. This sum is almost exactly equal to the subsidy cost of one single tax advantage in the Pechman-Okner report: income splitting, by which married couples are allowed to divide their joint income to get into lower tax brackets. About $7 billion of this subsidy goes to one group alone, the five per cent of the population that makes between $25,000 and $50,000 a year.

If we can bless the 25-granders with $7 billion for being married, we can certainly spend an equivalent amount to eliminate malnutrition. To guarantee every family a standard of living at the poverty level or above would cost $27 billion. This would not only eliminate poverty as currently defined, but it would also be an enormous step toward achieving other national goals related to poverty, such as housing, medical care, and nutrition. Furthermore, it would enable the country to cut back the growing kudzu of a poverty bureaucracy in government and its mirror apparatus in consulting land.

For conservatives, a guaranteed annual income would be pleasant because it would restore a modicum of work incentive to the poverty population, which now faces a system of outright discouragement. Jodie Allen of the Urban Institute has shown that if a welfare mother of three in Chicago increases her income from $4,000 to $5,000, the extra $1,000 will net her $98. She thus pays a marginal tax rate of 90 per cent by losing welfare benefits. Her next $1,000 in earnings will actually give her a net decrease of $147 in disposable income, for a marginal tax rate of 115 per cent. This situation may be compared with the current subsidy arrangement for people at the other end of the income scale, where a skillful operator can combine capital maintenance expenses with a capital gain in such a way as to show a tax loss while making a profit. The tax loss may be applied against other earnings to produce a tax rebate on what would otherwise be paid to Uncle Sam. Each dollar of capital gains is thus not only tax free, but it produces a tax bonus that rises according to the operator's bracket—truly a negative income tax for the wealthy. No guaranteed annual income plan will produce that kind of incentive for the Chicago mother, but it will give her 50 cents of every earned dollar to keep.

For the average man, the guaranteed annual income would get liberals off his back for awhile, allowing him to concentrate on his own advancement without having his conscience pricked by the words of people who make more money than he does. His consent to the plan is required not only because of his political attachment to the work ethic, but also because he will have to contribute modest sums to pay for it. This fact will have to be faced regarding any substantial income maintenance program, because the whole scheme cannot be financed from increased taxes on J. Paul Getty. Since only six per cent of families earn more than $25,000 and only 29 per cent earn more than $15,000, the income groups just above the average man will have to come up with some of the cost, and the average man will have to kick in a little, too. Of the $77 billion generated in tax subsidies in the Pechman-Okner calculations, 47 per cent came from the handful of the population with incomes greater than $25,000, and 43 per cent came from those with incomes between $10,000 and $25,000. The first group gets

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about six times as much subsidy per capita as the second, but the more numerous "middle class" group comes out with nearly the same amount of federal gratuity.

I mention this unpleasant situation only to point out the nonsense that many young people like myself fall prey to in thinking that all the poor can be fed from the drippings off David Rockefeller's table. There is something strange about those of us who long to smite the filthy rich and crusade for the poor, while at the same time fully expecting to earn incomes that will place us in the richest 10 per cent of the population (assuming that a decent living wage is $20,000 or so). The contradiction can be concealed, as it is far easier for students to hide their affluence while identifying with the poor than for the poor to get away with the trick in reverse. But it pokes out every now and then with overtones of hypocrisy—somewhat analogously to our demonstrating against the war while utilizing the college deferment to transfer its burden elsewhere. Our kinky moral position should check the full battle cry against the robber barons—it is like going to the barricades with a proclamation of knighthood tucked away back home in the closet. The upshot of the distributive picture is that you can expect the majority of tax subsidies, and the other ones as well, to be rebated if necessary from those far richer—but you should be prepared to throw in a little yourself, just like a bad guy.

Political Wall Street

The average man may derive a third notion from the Proxmire report—that nearly every federal bill has an impact on the distribution of income, and that people may like the substance of a proposal for business or pollution or education, but not the unnecessary effects on income distribution. These effects are now considered carefully only by those special groups who stand to gain from them, and yet their cumulative weight is critical to almost everyone's standard of living. In fact, the subsidy study will begin to provide the knowledge which may show that the selective smiles and favors of government have more influence on the economy than the broad fiscal and monetary policies that have preoccupied people since Keynes. In other words, whether you have a job or an adequate standard of living may depend not on the Federal Reserve's interest rate policy or the general level of government expenditure, but on whether Uncle Sam has slipped you a little booster with your own name on it. You may be scratching down through the dust in the chicken yard of private enterprise, hoping for the magistrates to sprinkle a few well-chosen policies around to make things more fertile for everybody—but the real morsels may be bartered over in the next field, where you must jockey with your style, educated poise, organization, confidence, and any other attributes that might convince people you deserve something. With fiscal and monetary policy, officials have scrupulously tried to follow the old principle that government actions should treat people equally, and it is a great sin of conventional morality to use economic measures which discriminate among groups of people. In the subsidy-filled economy, however, there is no stigma attached to special benefits. Like an old rotary seed-planter, the federal budget spits them out to those who position themselves well, and everyone in your neighborhood is likely to get a different amount.

Engrossed in the intricate demands of all the separate beneficiaries of government, the politician simply has nothing of substance to say to the people in general anymore. He now speaks to people in smaller groups, where he lets it be known that a livelihood or a subsidy or at least a small fiscal hypo can be had for votes, or money. Thus, the average man is becoming exposed to a process that will make him regard Washington as

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he has always regarded Wall Street: he knows that in general his fortune may be indirectly determined there, where the economy is kept churning, but in particular he senses that he is being screwed. Like his poorer underlings, he may not see very well, but he can feel.

The citizen will now have more than his traditional reasons to curse Washington, but ultimately he lifts his eyes there in time of war, recession, accident, unemployment, and general malaise—and the insults he directs at the politicians are a measure of their significance.

The Rich Man's Purple Heart

While staring at a politician, the average man may have his fourth revelation about Senator Proxmire's work on subsidies—that the politics of subsidies are stacked against him, and that the whole situation has arisen with a push from more gnarly forces than economic miscalculation. As Senator Fred Harris testified before the Joint Economic Committee, "Subsidies are to modern politics what patronage was to the politics of the 19th century. Subsidies, in other words, are the lifeblood, tainted to be sure, of our electoral system, and this is precisely the reason why it is so hard to eliminate them." The analogy is an apt one, although the current subsidy arrangement is so thorough that one might say subsidies are to modern *society* what patronage was to 19th century politics, spelling out how each person gets along and where he fits in.

The average man will observe the politics buzzing as soon as he begins to question any of the premium payments to a special interest. The challenged group will marshall its forces and begin reciting its virtues in such a way as to transmit little information that would enable one to measure the value of the subsidy.

If pressed for specific justifications, the recipients will respond with four predictable arguments. World Bank economist Jeremy J. Warford catalogs them in *Public Policy Toward General Aviation*, his book on subsidies to the owners and operators of private airplanes. Private, or general aviation, aircraft account for 98 per cent of the 130,000 planes in the country, with the regular airlines owning the rest. They make about 75 per cent of all landings and take-offs requiring the facilities of FAA control towers, and 80 per cent of the private flights are deductible as business expenses for the executive owners. And Warford concludes that the owners of private planes receive about $640 million per year in subsidies for air traffic control, airport construction, and the like, above their aircraft taxes and fees. (About $500 million of the net subsidy comes from Washington, the rest from state and local governments.) Over the next decade, Warford estimates that the subsidy will cost about $3,500 per aircraft per year. Although the owners of private airplanes would seem to have a fairly rough assignment in justifying taxpayer gratuities for the owners of executive jets, they make their four arguments with the confidence of people who have won skirmishes with the public before.

Highest Common Denominator. If you can get the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association to admit that its members are subsidized, the first riposte will be that other forms of transportation receive subsidies—autos and bicycles through the construction of public roads, and so on—and that equity demands similar treatment for those who traffic privately in the sky. This line of reasoning skirts every question regarding whether the subsidy is justified and efficient, but it is politically potent. It is known as the subsidy multiplier, because once any gratuity becomes effective this mechanism is used to extend the benefits to any group that can claim the remotest likeness to the original beneficiary. Thus, subsidies seek the highest common denominator in the process which enables percentage depletion to

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seep into every mineral scarce enough to have any economic value.

Don't Hurt the Little Guy. The airplane people next hold forth that any tampering with the subsidies would place unconscionable burdens on the airborne small fry, the Piper Cubs and single-engine jobs. Strictly speaking, this is an argument for a welfare payment, based on human tenderness for the less fortunate fliers, and it should really carry no weight in the luxury field of air travel, but it apparently does.

Most interests were once hesitant to make the little-guy point because it appears too socialist in its sympathies. However, the experience of Medicare doctors has led many supporters of free enterprise to realize that socialism is not so bad if it combines socialized costs with capitalist benefits in a kind of guided collectivism. They have relaxed their capitalist principles enough to take advantage of the attention the hardship argument will win in the media.

Extraordinary Public Benefits. Every subsidized group has a favorite "public interest" rationale for its Treasury income. According to Warford, the aircraft operators have decided that "general aviation helps to arrest the decline of sparsely populated regions, thereby conferring benefits. . . for which the society as a whole, rather than the aircraft operators themselves, should be called upon to pay." This argument, arising contemporaneously with rural nostalgia, means that it would be a good idea to build airports out in the country so that private plane owners can touch the bellies of their Lear jets down out there and check rural depopulation. There is a shred of validity in the assertion that private airports stimulate rural industry location, but it is largely specious upon examination and ludicrously short of justifying such an enormous subsidy.

National Defense. No self-respecting special interest group can expect to get anywhere without at least one argument that can be located on the flag. (This is perhaps the critical shortcoming of welfare proponents, who do fairly well with arguments one through three.) The private skymen have risen to the occasion with the claim that they constitute a kind of unorganized reserve air force, whose mobility would be of great military value if the airfields were knocked out and the bigger planes couldn't operate for lack of adequate runways and facilities. As one pilot put the strategy to the Secretary of Transportation: "It would be a major advantage to the Communist plan to eliminate the vast facilities and National Defense Capabilities of general aviation's fleet of over 110,000 planes. Nearly all of these planes are capable of flying and operating from dirt strips, sections of streets and highways to anywhere in the country. As recently proven, Communist-led and -controlled civil rights mobs rioting, burning and looting are capable of closing entire cities. It would be a very minor job for them to riot and burn the few major airline terminals. . . . " This is the core of the argument, although it is usually toned down a bit in congressional hearings. Each executive in the informal air reserve can imagine himself hopping into his Cessna at a moment's notice, strafing militants, and saving the day. He requires neither medals nor draft notices to make military sacrifices for his country—needing only a small subsidy, a rich man's Purple Heart, which the pilots might prefer to call an advance against hazardous duty pay.

When the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association and the National Business Aircraft Association troop before Congress to support the federal payments to themselves—their measly 400 million scotch highballs—the average man is not likely to be well represented at the gathering. He probably doesn't yet know about the subsidy, for one thing, or about the character of the benefits. If he did, he might reason that it wouldn't be worth trooping all the way to Congress to contest his tiny pro rata

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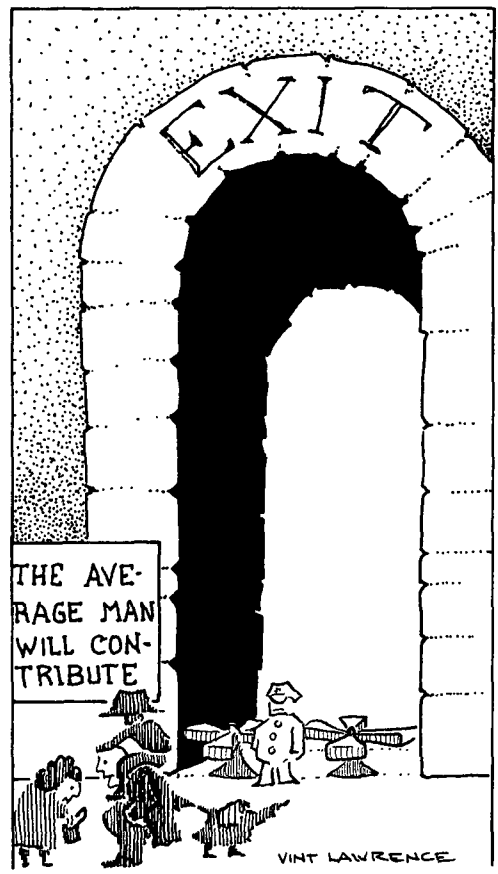
share of two jiggers. And if he decided to hire a public interest advocate like Ralph Nader, he would find that the costs of saving his two jiggers are not tax deductible, whereas the lobbying costs of corporate jet owners and all other corporations have been deductible since 1962. And even if payments to a public interest lobby were tax deductible, the average man would not benefit as much as most corporations because he is in a lower tax bracket—because, in effect, the subsidy for lobbying is unfairly designed. So the average man who decides to fight pays 48 per cent of the jet owners' lobbying expenses as a taxpayer and all of his own as an unsubsidized private citizen. The upshot of all this is that the hearings are lopsided enough for the private airmen to sell their putrid arguments easily and take home the cheese.

Once enacted, a subsidy is even more securely entrenched than the balance of forces at the hearing would indicate, because campaign contributions from the recipients give many politicians a deaf ear for the average man. These donations are the gyroscopes of subsidies, given not so much to obtain new benefits as to protect old ones. If a subsidy is a public bribe and a campaign contribution is essentially a private one, cleaned up, the mutual transaction makes sense only because the special interest groups get back more than they put in. If the airmen contributed as much as one per cent of their $500 million Treasury payment, they would have a political war chest of $5 million. This money would be well spent on friendly candidates, since the group would be buying dollars with pennies. (Of course, it is highly unlikely that such maintenance costs approach one per cent of the bonus, even for the maritime industry.) The candidates would take the contributions and use them to convince the voters of their dedication as public servants. Meanwhile, the average man would provide the fuel for the whole affair by coming up with the subsidy for the special group, a tiny portion of which would be kicked back to the politician to pay for his TV spots. The arrangement is a model of circular stability, and economists should give up study of the business cycle to focus on the rhythm of election finance.



The political obstacles weigh heavily against any effort to rearrange federal outlays fundamentally, but it is not impossible. If by some odd contrivance the average man succeeds in recovering these public favors, only to re-confer some of them on the poor, he will remain a screwed and unique citizen—absorbed with his labors, grabbing a little on the side—but his government will be a lot easier to swallow. And if a truly fair distribution of the subsidy largesse is beyond his immediate grasp, the practical implication for the average man is that he had better get in there and scrap. ■

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Tidbits and Outrages

Henry's Potion

Buried in the society section of *The Washington Star* was a report of an interesting conversation between Henry Kissinger and Peter Peterson, the new Secretary of Commerce. When Peterson accused Kissinger of not deserving his reputation as a lover, Henry retorted, "What you don't understand is that power is the ultimate aphrodisiac."

A Cable to What City?

There was a big news day for cable television on February 4, and some newspapers suffered from poor reception. *The New York Times* ran a story headlined "New Rules on Cable TV Limit Growth in Cities," while *The Washington Post* headlined its report "FCC Opens the Door to Let Cable TV into Major Cities."

A Citadel for the Liberty Bell:

(UPI) The National Park Service has decided to build a new $5 million home for one of America's most cherished symbols—the Liberty Bell.

The 2,080-pound bell has been housed in Independence Hall since the Revolutionary War.

The new home for the bell will be fireproof, and will have a closed-circuit television setup and and sliding bullet-proof glass doors. The bell will be suspended from 100-foot-long steel ropes.

Joe Pilati in The Boston Globe:

The Republican National Committee's sprightly and acerbic publication, *Monday*, would have us believe young Americans have come to regard President Nixon with nothing less than adulation. . . .

Monday devotes several pages to what purport to be headlines from two dozen leading daily newspapers, such as *The Globe* ("Nixon Gives Priority to Youth," June 8, 1970) and *The New York Times* ("President Shows Admirable Willingness to Adapt to Needs," April 6, 1971).

And there's the rub. We trained our gaze on *The Globe* library's microfilmed copies of both papers last week and discovered that the headlines and news stories to which *Monday* alluded never appeared.

From the Contradiction Department:

The Justice Department is trying to lower milk prices, while the Agriculture Department is trying to raise them.

Eileen Shanahan reported in *The New York Times* that the Justice Department filed an antitrust suit against the Associated Milk Producers, Inc., a cooperative of 40,000 farmers. The suit charges the nationwide cooperative with a host of illegal practices designed to keep milk prices high.

Meanwhile, the Agriculture Department has been boosting the federal dairy subsidy in order to increase milk prices.

John Pierson in The Wall Street Journal:

The oil industry has drilled itself a loophole in the clean water bill that Congress is due to pass in its 1972 session. Down this loophole, some pollution-fighters fear, could flow enough contaminants to foul water in oil-producing states for centuries to come.

Oil's loophole is tucked away near the end of the pending Federal Water Pollution Control Act amendments in a harmless-sounding section called "general definitions." The section resembles the fine print of an insurance policy. Section 502(F) says that the term "pollutant," as used in the bill, does not mean:

> . . . water, gas, or other material which is injected into a well to facilitate production of oil or gas, or water derived in association with oil or gas production and disposed of in a well, if the well used either to facilitate production or for disposal purposes is approved by authority of the state in which the well is located.

That's a lawyer's way of saying that the federal government will let oil producers continue to dump all sorts of chemicals—some of them harmful to humans—into the ground.

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POLITICAL NUMBERS:

The Cities Turn a Corner

by Michael Rappeport

Nothing is gloomier these days than a conference of futurists, projecting exponential growth in social problems and calculating that there is little hope. Some recent demographic facts about American cities, however, point to a significant easing of pressure on urban governments. In fact, a confluence of statistics and court decisions indicates that the cities may have turned a historic corner.

The single most important fact is that the absolute number of school children *declined* between 1969 and 1972, with further decreases certain to occur in the future. The statistics in Table I represent Census Bureau figures projected through 1975. The 1975 numbers are highly accurate, of course, because virtually everyone who will be in school by 1975 was included in the 1970 census.

This shift is vitally important for city finances, because about 42 per cent of all state and local government spending goes for education. The need for rapid growth in school expenditures will slacken somewhat now that the school population no longer bulges upward every year as it did in the 1960s. (More than 40 per cent of the increase in teacher costs in the '60s was caused by jumps in enrollment and drops in the pupil/teacher ratio. The leveling off of these factors may now point toward even lower costs.) In addition, this stabilization is taking place just as teacher salaries appear finally to have "caught up" with the general level of wages. With the major portion of teachers' relative advancement almost completed (public salaries in many places are now higher than comparable private salaries), another large burden on city budgets should be lessened.

The leveling off in population, with a consequent decrease in the percentage of young people, should help city finances in areas other than education. A good part of the upsurge

Michael Rappeport is Director of Statistical Services at Opinion Research Corporation in Princeton, N. J. This article uses ORC research; the opinions are solely the author's.

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in crime (with its many attendant public costs) during the last decade was due to an almost 50 per cent increase in the population of those of high-school age and slightly older. Since more than half of all arrested persons are under 21, the stabilizing of that portion of the population should ease crime rates.

The 1970 census reveals another major demographic fact: that the potential for migration of poor people (mostly Southern blacks) to the cities has sharply declined. As Table II shows, the absolute number of blacks outside the metropolitan areas diminished only slightly in the last 10 years. With almost 60 per cent of all blacks now living in the central cities, one of America's historic migrations is coming to an end, at least relatively, and quite possibly in absolute numbers. The lessening of this influx of poor people will reduce the demand on city budgets for public services. This reduced migration, when coupled with declining birth rates for both blacks and whites in the cities, should reduce the pressure for the spread of ghettos.

Finally, a series of court decisions may complement the relief for the city budgets that seems evident in the demographic statistics. In California, Minnesota, Texas, and New Jersey, the courts have mandated essentially that the burdens of education be equalized throughout a state. And as suburban tax rates are increased, there will be a reduced incentive for both people and industry to leave the city. (Businesses, which move away from population centers largely because of tax costs, would find less advantage in moving if statewide tax systems were adopted in place of local property taxes; and suburbs would have less reason to offer tax advantages if industrial taxes went to the state instead of to local schools.) The costs of city dwellings would also drop compared to the same dwellings in the suburbs, due to the changed tax structure.

Thus, three major determinants in the problems of cities—the proportion of young people in the population, the immigration of poor people, and the high tax rates relative to the suburbs—are undergoing a period of great change. These reversals in trend will hardly bring an urban millenium, but they may well bring considerably greater promise to the future of the cities. ■

TABLE I

Pupils in School in Fall of Year (in thousands)

	Elementary	High	Total
1960	32,441	10,249	42,670
1965	35,120	12,975	48,095
1967	36,272	13,789	50,061
1969	36,647	14,553	51,200
1971	35,423	15,330	50,753
1973	34,023	15,814	49,837
1975	32,832	15,939	48,771

TABLE II

Population by Area (in millions)

	1960	1970
White		
Central Cities	49.4	48.8
Suburbs	55.7	71.6
Rural and Small Town	53.7	57.2
Black		
Central Cities	9.9	13.1
Suburbs	2.8	3.7
Rural and Small Town	6.1	5.9

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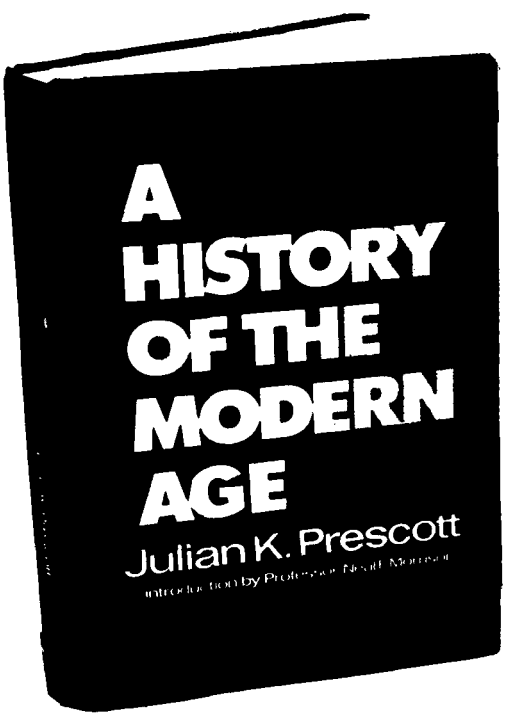
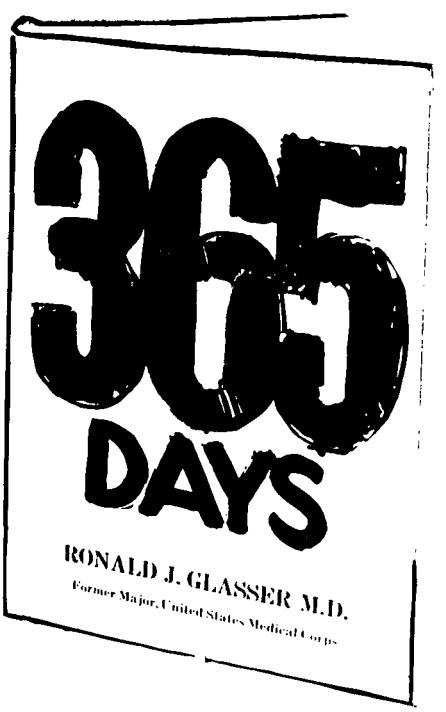
Annual Political Book Award

The Washington Monthly wishes to recognize the best of those books that explore the processes and values of the institutions that govern America, the books that share our purpose of identifying where the system breaks down, why it breaks down, and what can be done to make it work.





The award for 1971 goes to
A History of the Modern Age
by Julian K. Prescott
and
365 Days
by Ronald J. Glasser

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The Red Badge of Literature

a review by William Styron

Why is it that the war in Vietnam has inspired tons of journalism, most of it ordinary, yet such a small amount of imaginative literature? Could this be merely the continuation of a negative trend which began during the Korean War—a conflict which also produced little that was notable in the way of fiction, drama, or poetry? For up until the past two decades the wars America engaged in proved to be the catalyst for memorable work from some of our finest writers. In the best of these works—those of Whitman and Melville, Hemingway, Dos Passos, e. e. cummings, Mailer, James Jones—the writers seemed possessed by an almost Euripidean need to demonstrate the eternal tragedy and folly of warfare, its persistence as a mysterious and destructive force dwelling in the very matrix of our nature, its stupidity, its boredom and anguish, and the glorious heroism it sometimes calls forth in spite of itself. In retrospect, it may be that both the appeal and the vitality of these novels and poems—and of lesser yet beautifully crafted works like John Horne Burns' novel of World War II, *The Gallery*—had to do with a kind of residual unconscious romanticism. After all, the Civil War and the two World Wars of this century, whatever their horrors and whatever the historical blunders and idiocies that propelled them into being, possessed moral aspects which could make an individual's participation in the conflict not entirely ignoble. Both Stephen Crane and Hemingway were conscious of the insanity, the brutalization of war, but there were still a few idealistic principles embedded in the Civil War and the First World War, thus lending to *The Red Badge of Courage* and *A Farewell to Arms* certain ironies and contradictions which helped give to each, finally, a romantic and tragic resonance.

It is possible, then, that the further we remove ourselves from wars in which a vestige of idealism exists or—to put it the other way around—the more we engage in waging wars which approach being totally depraved, the less likely we are to produce imaginative writing which contains many plausible outlines of humanity. It is a long leap, both historically and aesthetically, from the clear, frightened, distinctive identity of the hero of Stephen Crane (to whom, incidentally, Ronald J. Glasser's book* is dedicated) to the blurred, undifferentiated, curiously

William Styron is author of Lie Down in Darkness *and* The Confessions of Nat Turner.

**365 Days*, by Ronald J. Glasser, George Braziller, $6.95.

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one-dimensional 20th-century victims wandering or staggering through the Vietnamese landscape of *365 Days*; yet it is a tribute to Glasser's great skill as a writer that from this most morally loathsome of wars, which has in some way degraded each person who has been touched by it, he has fashioned a moving account about tremendous courage and often immeasurable suffering. It is therefore a valuable and redemptive work, providing as it does a view of the war from the vantage point of a man who has not only been there but has himself, obviously, seen and suffered much.

Glasser is a physician, a former Army major who found himself assigned in 1968 to the U. S. Army hospital at Zama, in Japan. It was here that he first encountered the evacuated wounded from Vietnam, "the blind 17-year-olds stumbling down the hallway, the shattered high-school football player being wheeled to physical therapy." Trained as a pediatrician, Glasser relates how he began to feel a special empathy for these blown-apart, uncomplaining, sometimes hideously mangled casualties of war. "I soon realized," he writes, "that the troopers they were pulling off those med evac choppers were only children themselves. . . . At first, when it was all new, I was glad I didn't know them; I was relieved they were your children, not mine. After a while, I changed." In the act of changing, in the process of becoming involved with these boys, Glasser listened to many stories about the horrors of combat in Vietnam. They were grim stories mostly, touched with the cold hand of mortality and having to do with slow or sudden death and unspeakable wounds, yet some of the tales were wildly improbable and overlaid by the graveyard hilarity that inevitably accompanies any chronicle of warfare.

Recounted in a dry, dispassionate, superbly controlled and ironic voice, these anecdotes mingle at random with Glasser's own vividly observed, first-hand sketches of hospital life in Japan. The effect is disorganized, laconic, rather unsettlingly fragmentary, until one realizes that such a disjointed technique is perfectly suited to the outlines of the lunatic war itself: its greedy purposelessness, its manic and self-devouring intensity, its unending tableaux of helicopters crashing on missions to nowhere, futile patrols ending in bloody slaughter, instantaneous death in some remote mess area miles behind the action. Glasser's yeoman soldiers, aided by modern technology, are as miserably up to their necks in war as

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were those of Shakespeare. They trip over mines and are reduced to vegetables; after a night of grisly hand-to-hand murder they are enraged when the cook runs out of cornflakes; they nervously conspire to kill their swinish senior officers, and then chicken out. These awful vignettes are rendered with splendid understatement. It is a banal and senseless war, lacking either heroes or a chorus. Perhaps only an ear exquisitely attuned to the banal and senseless, like Glasser's, could do justice to such a nightmare: certainly many of these pages of callow, dyspeptic dialogue—uttered out of young souls quite trampled down with despair and fatigue—are as authentic and as moving a transcription of the soldier's true voice as any written in recent memory.

But if the war has been a war made up of victims and has been denied its true heroes, it has nonetheless had its moments of great sacrifice and courage in the face of incredible suffering. It is through Glasser's calm, unsentimental revelation of such moments that we are able to shake off some of the horror with which these pages are so often steeped and to see *365 Days* as the cleansing and redemptive document it is. Nearly all of Glasser's stories of combat, although admittedly second-hand (as was *The Red Badge of Courage*), are remarkable miniature portraits of men at war. It is in the hospital episodes, however, where the force of Glasser's professional concern melts with the compassion and sensibility of a gifted storyteller, that we are given scenes of wrenching power. In the last story* in the book, Major Edwards, a doctor in the hospital burn unit, is faced with the hopeless task of saving a young soldier cruelly burned across 80 per cent of his body. The tale is simple, the situation uncomplicated: a dedicated physician, through no other motive than that resulting from the mighty urge to hold back death, trying against all odds to salvage someone who himself is suffering, without complaint, ecstasies of pain. Two human beings, then, locked in the immemorial struggle against inexplicable fate. This is a familiar story and one that could have been both clinical and cloying, but Glasser's hand is so sure, his eye so clear, that the moment of the boy's imminent death and his last cry to the doctor—"I don't want to go home alone"—seem to rise to form a kind of unbearable epiphany to the inhuman waste and folly of war.

It is this quality, reverent at its best, enormously touching in its concern for the simple worth and decency of life, that gives *365 Days* its great distinction and may cause it—one hopes—to become one of those rare chronicles we can use to help alleviate the killing pain of this war, and its festering disgrace. For it shows that in the midst of their most brutish activity there is a nobility in men that war itself cannot extinguish. As Glasser says, in one of the most poignant of his passages, about the "medics": "In a world of suffering and death, Vietnam is like a Walt Disney True-Life Adventure, where the young are suddenly left alone to take care of the young. . . . A tour of Nam is 12 months; it is like a law of nature. The medics, though, stay on line only seven months. It is not due to the good will of the Army, but to their discovery that seven months is about all these kids can take. After that, they start getting freaky, cutting down on their own water and food so they can carry more medical supplies; stealing plasma bottles and walking around on patrol with five or six pounds of glass in their rucksacks; writing parents and friends so they can buy their own endotracheal tubes; or quite simply refusing to leave their units when their time in Nam is over.

"And so it goes, and the gooks know it. They will drop the point, trying not to kill him but to wound him, to get him screaming so they can get the medic too. He'll come. They know he will." ■

*Published in the April, 1971, issue of *The Washington Monthly* as "The Burn Ward."

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The Imaginary Insider

a review by John Rothchild

*A History of the Modern Age** begins where fact leaves off. This is not to say that Julian Prescott's epic volume is completely misleading, but only to recognize the dilemma that the author himself well understood as the one that created the need for this book: when governments deliberately mask their intentions, when politicians omit their frank appraisals even in memoirs, when the explanations for world events never seem to fit the actions, when, in effect, the political reality is a grand fiction, then the work of the true historian is to imagine. Such was the global mendacity in this modern, post-war cold-war age Prescott so admirably describes that made his bald-faced inventions necessary. Neal Morrison, a fictitious professor who wrote the preface, apologizes, or defends, the deliberate inaccuracies of the author: "Perhaps reality itself is a white blur of paranoid fantasy. Perhaps Prescott's history more closely approximates the truth. . . than those that pass themselves off as 'true.' "

Those of us who have lived through this Modern Age could only second the sentiments. Prescott is a creation of the current historical nemesis: who can explain the mess we are in? No official rationales have thus far been satisfactory, or even convincing, as to why we got into Vietnam or why we built up the defense establishment, and the more we read about it, the more confused we get.

One of the reasons for this, Prescott would postulate, is that in the Modern Age, men do not dare say what they think, and the words that are clearly heard, especially from the powerful, are usually words that have been generated by creative writers. Thus, the historian, if he is to be true to his source, cannot rely on the contrived verbal output of politicians any more than a child can rely on the expressed feelings of a Barbie doll. The problem is compounded by the fact that most historians are paid by the same government, directly or indirectly, that rewards the sources of the words themselves. This makes history, by definition, a double fiction, and the only way to combat this circular illusion is to divine what really would have been said if the principal actors on the world stage had been free to improvise. This Prescott has done—giving us the first reliable insider's account on what was going through the minds of everybody from Stalin to Dulles to Kennedy as they committed us to the lunacy in which we live.

Prescott's *A History of the Modern Age* is true to its own form in the sense that Julian Prescott himself is a fiction—a product, like all the cold war dialogues dutifully recorded within—of the imagination of Albert Fried, an assistant professor at Sarah Lawrence. (It is easy to believe that it took less imagination on Fried's part to guess what was really being thought than on the part of all his contemporaries to write the official versions.)

**A History of the Modern Age.* Julian K. Prescott. Doubleday, $7.95.

John Rothchild is an editor of The Washington Monthly.

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Even for all its gaps, and for the fictitious nature of both Morrison and Prescott (Morrison himself even doubts Prescott's credibility—he writes in a footnote, "How could Prescott have known what passed between Eisenhower and Nixon? Either one of them later reconstructed the conversation for him, or he invented it"), there is little doubt in my mind that *A History of theM odern Age* is the most convincing chronicle of the period that I have yet read or ever expect to read. The result of this declassifying-through-fantasy, this make-believe history of Fried's, is that one is glad Prescott was there to make some sense out of all of it—and should this book be left alongside *Vantage Point* and the other works of delusion for the readers of posterity, Fried's will surely be the authoritative document. His dialogues stick in the brain, much as a wrong definition that sounds closer to what the meaning should be than the real definition itself.

Ike's Dream and Inner Prescott's

Fried is faithful to the facts, at least as far as great events are concerned—all his places and dates and battles are correct, and his complete panorama of the maneuverings among Russia, China, and the United States takes us back in objective fashion through the cold war—the division of Germany, Korea, the rise of Mao, the death of Stalin, the McCarthy era, Sputnik, U-2, the Bay of Pigs, Indochina. His own inventions are the conferences that occurred before these events, where the various courses of action are debated. It is in these meetings that Fried puts words in the mouths of Kennedy, Rusk, Khrushchev, and comes out with a subtle, convincing, and hilarious mixture of ideology, fear, pettiness, rectitude, cussedness, proverbs, sarcasms, and dim thoughts, the fuel on which the world does, and has always, revolved. The subtlety of Fried's genius is illustrated in the fact that Herbert Mitgang, editor of the op ed page of *The New York Times*, inquired of the publisher whether the real author of *A History of the Modern Age* hadn't seen an advance copy of the Pentagon Papers, guessing that he couldn't have written such an authoritative and convincing account without special insider's knowledge.

It is hard to recreate the spirit of Prescott's history, so much of its worth depends on context and detail, but the following is an attempted condensation of why we went into the Bay of Pigs.

The issue was decided, Prescott says, in a National Security Council meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, along with Rusk, McNamara, Douglas Dillon, Robert Kennedy, CIA Director Dulles, McGeorge Bundy, Rostow, Fulbright, and two unnamed professors present.

Kennedy: "Gentlemen, you know what brings us here. The situation in Cuba has reached a crisis point, and we—I—must come to a determination one way or another. Without further ado I'll have Mr. Allen Dulles explain the situation to you."

Dulles: "All of you are familiar, I'm sure, with events in Cuba and our relations with the Castro regime. . . . I'm not suggesting that Batista wasn't bad, only that Castro wasn't the most desirable alternative from our point of view. And so when he seized power a little more than two years ago my people weren't surprised when he turned out to be a Marxist-Leninist and when he pretty rapidly joined the Soviet camp. There was a great hue and cry in this country, but we—and I claim this with no special sense of pride—we had foreseen these developments. . . .We currently have some 15,000 Cuban exiles, all young and eager, under arms and in various stages of training and proficiency. So far as they are concerned, I would say, yes, they, or most of them, are ready to go in and fight. They are well led and know what to do.

"Mr. President, I would urge that they go in within two to three weeks. The moment is critical. The guerrillas in the Escombrey Mountains and elsewhere are strong and await the signal to come down. The cities will rise up simultaneously. Our operatives there tell me that discontent is rife, though it must remain invisible for fear of the secret

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police, who are ubiquitous."

When one of the unnamed professors asked what kind of a government this action would produce, he got this response:

McGeorge Bundy: "The Administration has given the matter considerable thought. We'll settle for nothing less than a liberal, democratic government, one that guarantees free elections and civil liberties. We're not as stuck as our predecessors were on returning the nationalized industries to American firms. We'll insist only on responsible compensation."

Rusk: "That's exactly right. And Mr. Dulles, your men have weeded out the most notorious of the Batista followers from the training program, haven't they?"

Dulles: "So far as I know, Mr. Secretary, they have, yes. But sometimes it's difficult, and we've found that the people who worked for Batista have proved the most experienced in handling arms, in giving commands, and the like. . . . "

Schlesinger: "What we have, then, is the vital center, the democratic way between totalitarian extremes among the exiles. And when they assume power they will maintain the vital center as their controlling ideology."

Dulles: "Why yes, I would say so."

The foregoing excerpt represents only one dimension of Fried's history—the attempt to fill in the factual gaps with imagination. (Sometimes he fails in this, but generally his guesses seem on the mark.) In a second dimension, though, he tries to by-pass our overblown concern for accuracy—what was said, when, and by whom—with complete and undisguised fantasy. In what other history can you find the convincing report of the cold war strategy session, coupled with an account of a meeting at which Richard Nixon and Lyndon Johnson struggle to interpret President Eisenhower's disturbing dream that he is walking through a corn field of grave markers back in Kansas? And who else but Prescott can give you both the inside story on the Eisenhower U-2 meetings, which actually occurred, and also a vivid account of a more ethereal meeting between Khrushchev and Mao Tse Tung in Mongolia that

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kicked off the Soviet split? ("Even the West knew nothing about it," says Prescott.) In these latter passages, Fried confronts our own prejudices and cultural views by exposing them as reality.

Fried's imaginary insider, then, is an attempt to free the secrets of Washington not only from the diplomatic files but also from somewhere deep within our own minds, and the Prescott who roamed the corridors of the powerful is the same as the one who roams somewhere in our own consciousness. Most history makes the reader an audience, but Fried's fictional approach forces participation because he does not separate the characters from the matrix of belief that produced them. To the extent that leaders express or culminate national values, our search for a salvation in facts, which often leads us to seek more facts than really exist, denies the personal intuitions about society that would make such facts superfluous or predictable. If current history is a continual surprise, it is because we haven't examined our inner Prescotts thoroughly enough—even Fried's casual look makes things begin to fall into place.

Prescott in the Shag Rug

On either of these levels, a reading of Prescott is ample proof of its own worth, but it must also be judged as a reaction to the current theories and practices of history. The limitations of the popular techniques (that make Prescott's unique approach so useful) are demonstrated in the very manner that the nation's reviewers—the historians of literature—have reacted to the book. When first published, *A History of the Modern Age* got a flurry of notoriety, as *Time* launched the speculation on the real identity of Prescott, and deduced from the quality of the book, "a fascinating chronicle of the cold war," that its author must be an insider of important political lineage, and most probably John Kenneth Galbraith.

But no reviews were forthcoming, the *Time* article deferred the commentators from their normal rhythms as they waited for the announcement of the author—presumably they didn't want to be embarrassed by misguessing the identity of an obviously well-known statesman writing his pop memoirs. Then *Newsweek* blew the cover, and this Galbraith turned out to be a mere assistant professor at a girls' school, and, as *Newsweek* put it, "the closest Fried ever came to the high councils of state was when he flunked a job interview with the U. S. Foreign Service nearly 20 years ago." This announcement consigned the book to obscurity—no major publications save *The Saturday Review*, and no large newspapers save *The Washington Star*, reviewed it—not *The New York Times Book Review*, *The New York Review of Books*, the two aforementioned news magazines, *The Washington Post*, or *Book World*. The tables were turned—where the quality of the book had first suggested that the author had great stature, now the stature of the book was reduced to the relative lack of notoriety of its real author, and Fried, like his man Prescott, became anonymous.

Of course, Fried himself wrote the history because the reported details of the personages involved often masked the real import of what they believed, so perhaps it is fitting that the reviewers proved the point in reverse. If Prescott had been real, he would have been handicapped by the same ill fate as the other chroniclers of the time—who treated government as they treated Fried's book, giving credence in proportion to status, leaving various gems of history on the shag rug while searching in the clouds. Hence, the necessity for this hunched-over, invisible, hanger-on to see things that others didn't.

Peace Among the Scribes

This is not the first time that an age has needed its Prescott, nor the first time that popularity has treated

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such an effort unkindly. In one sense, his book attempts to break a historical cycle—the politicians who want to live in history tend to imitate the bombastic pose of past politicians as portrayed by past historians who were trying to become transcendent by imitating the bombastic prose of their predecessors.

In pursuing this end, Prescott and his admirers do have a few predecessor allies. There was Hendrik van Loon, who interviewed the great men across the centuries and across the spectrum of sympathy from Erasmus to Torquemada. There was Karl Marx, who, as journalist Murray Kempton points out, wrote *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* with no access to inside sources and produced a work remarkably akin to that written by de Tocqueville, who had the keys to the palace. Then, there were the Greeks. Morrison, in his introduction, makes some mention of them, remarking that Prescott "compared the United States to Athens in the fifth century B. C., following the defeat of Persia." The historians of Hellas were well acquainted with Prescott's methods, in fact, the innovation for them was the factual account, not the fictional rendering. Thucydides was thought to be the most accurate chronicler of the time, but even he was famous for contriving interviews to fill in the gaps. Aside from the more philosophical motivations of Fried, however, Thucydides did so largely because of problems of reproduction in an age without tape recorders or newspapers:

> As to the speeches which were made either before or during the war, it was hard for me, and for others. . . to recollect the exact words. I have therefore put into the mouth of each speaker the sentiments proper to the occasion, expressed as I thought he would be likely to express them. . . .

The Greek historians debated the foibles of their craft much more openly than the historians of our own day, and we find that they amply covered the merits of subjectivity and objectivity. We can hear Arthur Schlesinger's answer to Prescott in Plutarch's retort to Herodotus, well-known for his fanciful invention:

> Is it not more likely that our author, with his picturesque and entrancing style, his charm and wit and grace, has been telling us "old wive's tales with all the poet's skill," and not merely with the poet's polish and sweetness? No doubt everybody finds him attractive and enchanting, but evil-speaking and slander lurk among his smooth, pretty phrases like stinging flies among roses. Be on your guard, or he will poison your minds with grotesquely false ideas of the noblest and greatest countries and men of Hellas.

Or Sorensen's answer in Polybius' attack on Timaeus:

> A historian's duty is not to practice upon his readers or to show off his literary ability at their expense, but to do his best to investigate and elucidate the words actually spoken, confining himself throughout to the most vital and effective passages. . . . The fact that every volume of his works is full of such spurious matter is common knowledge.

The squabbles of the Greeks provided the tonic that neutralized their own particular inaccuracies. A reader can always play one off against the other, the debates between them providing ample evidence of the pettinesses and blind spots of each.

In our own time, however, we find that none of the historians lampooned by Fried—either indirectly through the challenge of his method, or directly by being quoted in the book—have seen fit to respond to his challenge. This makes Prescott all the more necessary, because when historians, like labor and management, do not tussle publicly among themselves, then truth must be the loser. One cannot believe that current history is any more inherently objective than that of Thucydides' time, but the nature of its subjectivity is harder to grasp in the public peace among the scribes and in the conformity of their approach—which is as damnable as peace among the tyrants—more so, in fact, because the only way left to oppose a tyrant is to put him down on paper.

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MEMO of the Month

Sacramento City-County Library

Intra-Department Correspondence

Date October 14, 1971

To : ALL LIBRARY PERSONNEL – Shirley Louthan

From : HAROLD D. MARTELLE
CITY-COUNTY LIBRARIAN

Subject: PERSONNEL PROFILE FORM AND TELEPHONE DIRECTORY ATTACHMENT

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In order to implement this form as soon as possible, please complete and return both the Profile and the attached sheet relating to the projected telephone directory of library personnel to the Personnel Office by Wednesday, October 27, 1971.

Thank you for your cooperation and immediate attention.

Harold D. Martelle, Jr.
City-County Librarian

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What Do People Do All Day

The question is, why does this slavery continue? People have a way of taking it for granted that all work is done for a sound purpose. They see somebody else doing a disagreeable job, and think that they have solved things by saying that the job is necessary. Coal-mining, for example, is hard work, but it is necessary, we must have coal. Working in the sewers is unpleasant, but somebody must work in the sewers. And similarly with a plongeur*'s work. Some people must feed in restaurants, and so other people must swab dishes for 80 hours a week. It is the work of civilization, therefore unquestionable. This point is worth considering.*
—from *Down and Out in Paris and London* by George Orwell.

It's an easier living to work with your brain instead of your body.
—Nick Abruzzi, bricklayer

a review by Suzannah Lessard

A children's book by Richard Scarry called *What Do People Do All Day?* shows the chain of labor on a certain product—bread from the farmer, to trucker, to baker, to housewife—the simultaneity of activity—the dentist, the shoemaker—and the different cuts of town and country in which all this busyness takes place. The book is not just entertaining but interesting to both the child and the adult reader—interesting in the especially absorbing and satisfying way that everyday things getting done can be. Kenneth Lasson's *The Workers,** nine portraits of workers and what they do in a day, is written not to prove a point—although it is a Nader book—but just to describe different characters, their jobs, how they approach them, and what's on their minds as they do them. Like Richard Scarry's book, it's hypnotic.

None of the nine workers are in robot-like employment, but all are in the solid base of what Orwell calls the "work of civilization": a coal miner, a garbage man, a telephone operator, a maid, a baker, a bricklayer, a waitress, a cop, and a New York cabbie. Almost all the jobs entail a degree of physical discomfort (stench, heat, noise), and some involve danger. But (though he doesn't seem to think so himself) the coal miner's occupation is the only one which strikes me as really intolerable physically, and the telephone operator's is the only one which comes off as insufferably boring. Of them all these two are the most likely to make one feel acutely

**The Workers.* Ken Lasson. Grossman, $5.95

Suzannah Lessard is an editor of The Washington Monthly.

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guilty about one's good luck in having escaped the more menial work of civilization, about the human price others pay to make the world go around while the privileged engage in loftier pursuits. But more than making one feel lucky or guilty, the book brings one up short against the affectations and pet delusions in the realm of loftier pursuits. Perhaps because of the undeniable *usefulness* of what these people do—often less clear in grander endeavors such as journalism—and the simplicity and lack of presumption with which they work, they jolt the reader into a reassessment of self as well as society. Lasson keeps out of the way, often leaving his subjects to speak for themselves, and in themselves they are instructive. Because they really know what they are doing, and, living so much in it, also know the world, you learn a lot—information—from them. But they also trigger reflection.

Fate operates more nakedly in these lives than in other classes. They fell into their professions, usually through the first job they happened to land: "I had a friend in the business and the money was pretty good so I went in. That was around 1947," says the garbage man. He subsequently served in the Marines and missed getting into the police force through a fluke and so remains a garbage man, albeit a driver rather than a barrel shaker. The miner went underground at 17 in his father's footsteps: "When I was in the coal mine, I never tried to find another job. I don't know why. I just didn't." Early one morning in 1928 the baker saw a classified ad, "Boy wanted to work in bakery," and got there before anyone else. He'd held other jobs but "I just couldn't stay out of bakeries. Every time I went to work someplace else, something would happen. Three or four summers I worked in a can-making factory, I was laid off. I worked at Martin's as an airplane mechanic. So every time I'd find myself back in a bakery, no matter what I'd done." He now wears the coveted white hard hat

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which distinguishes the bakers from the linemen.

The average middle-class youth might be as predetermined away from auto-mechanics as the coal miner was from the law, but he at least conceives of himself as free to choose between a number of professions. Even people on the middle-class level who feel no magnetic draw towards their work believe in vocation as a concept. Mothers hope their sons will become doctors in the same way they used to hope for a priest in the family. Finding out what you *want* to do is considered an intrinsic part of growing up, of finding yourself. Yet for Lasson's people it's the arbitrary game of tinker-tailor-soldier-sailor. In other words, fate. They want better things for their children—a job of higher status, which means, I suppose, choice—but they're not unhappy with their status or in the least self-conscious about it. They are comfortable with fate.

Baker versus Banker

They are also comfortable with obscurity. Our better institutions of higher learning seem to inculcate, if nothing else, a morbid fear of obscurity. Flat fame isn't necessarily the goal, though it will do nicely, but stature, recognition of superiority in some form, is essential, which is why the trappings of rank—large offices, receptionists—are obsessive concerns, even necessities, in the middle- and upper-class working force. On balance it is difficult to say why a banker in a large institution, one of identical thousands, is much less obscure than a baker: whatever difference does exist, it hardly measures up to the vast differences in terms of self-image and pretentions between the two men. The banker is a figure of respect in his little world but so is the baker—neither is known beyond the little sphere of his organization. The banker makes more money, but that only differentiates him from the baker, not from the masses on his own income level. Like the baker he is employed in the repetitive, never-finished, everyday business of making the world go around, leaving no special mark of his own, his handiwork swallowed up daily. The only telling distinction between them lies in the props: everything surrounding the banker indicates his importance while the baker has only his hat. And there is probably a far solider connection between what he does and his hat than between the banker's function and his trappings, which is why the banker so assiduously maintains those appearances—he depends on them for the suspension of disbelief. So in the end the difference is that the baker is the less deluded of the two. In this sense reading about him and his peers is a relief. He is comfortable in the obscurity most of us share.

This adjustment to reality engenders an on-the-job dignity far less apparent in the air-conditioned offices of the higher professions. The garbage man, driving his huge Brockway Huskey down the freeway, backing into difficult corners, manipulating the dangerous hydraulic compressing mechanism, never letting up his pace, is curiously splendid. Most white-collar workers, on the other hand, are slightly diminished on the job: the young associate in a fancy law firm may be dashing and impressive at a dinner party, but visit him the next day in his office and he will seem measurably reduced. He is pigeonholed in a hierarchy, enslaved, observing arbitrary rules of decorum. Though he's probably beating his brains out, there is little sense of competent doing, of self-sufficiency in work, about him. His personality is strangely muffled, his dignity inexplicably sapped, and, as a result, a slight awkwardness is likely to color any conversation. It's hard to say why this is, except possibly that he lacks an awareness shared by most of Lasson's people of his direct usefulness to people, as opposed to a company, or a superior. One suspects that his sense of worth is more attached to being a

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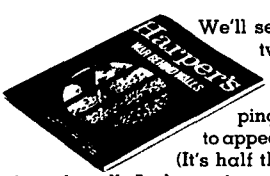

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lawyer at Arnold & Porter than to the uses of lawyering per se. At best he is probably confused on this issue, a confusion born of the fear of obscurity.

The coal miner was drafted in World War II, but they sent him back to the mines: "They needed this coal." "It's a necessity," says the garbage man. "I don't have any regrets, I'm not complaining. There are better jobs around, and I'm not crazy about this one with the grind and the hustling and the smell, but I don't think it's the lowest of the low. Somebody's got to do it. Can you imagine what it would be like if nobody wanted to pick up the garbage?" The companies for which these people work are, for them, just vehicles through which they do necessary jobs. As they see it, they don't work for organizations, they work for people, doing jobs that have to be done. The cost is anonymity, the anonymity that the associate lawyer is spared by having Arnold & Porter attached to his identity. But he, too, pays a price. Asked exactly how his work is useful, he and his peers in other professions are likely to recoil from the question altogether. It's liable to be an embarrassing, somehow inappropriate question. Against that assurance, openness and lack of pretense exhibited by Lasson's workers in their job situations, this intangible wrongness in higher zones leads one to come out of this book seeing especially clearly how much the obsession with Making It—as opposed to Doing It—is a distraction and a curse.

The other side of this coin is that while the lawyer is reduced in his work situation, Lasson's people are reduced when they leave work. This, more than the physical oppressions they suffer on the job, is the truly upsetting revelation in this book. The tired folk going home to a beer, supper, and a television show which they cannot see out before falling asleep in their chairs are shockingly transformed. There is little dignity

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Mr. Dooley

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here, just people being used up, a relentless sapping of life-blood, symbolized by that alarm clock set as they fall at last into bed, or even more shockingly by the new shift which passes the coal miner as he wearily walks to his car. We've all seen it: the cook, glorious in his apron, tyrannical in his domain, walking out the back door of the restaurant, a broken-down little man in cracked shoes and an old coat; the doorman leaving in the morning, giving in to his stoop, unrecognizable in his plain hat. That's when obscurity becomes a threatening, devouring condition. That's when you realize that the bricklayer is right, that it's an easier living to work with your brains than your body, that the demand for a four-day week is far from greedy. The sense of usefulness does not alter the fact that much of this work is so brutally monotonous and physically draining that the useful worker is almost useless to himself at the end of a day. A reduction in hours wouldn't make the work any better; it would just create breathing space, time for regeneration, so shockingly scarce in the lives described in this book. One might counter by asking why one should feel worse for these people than for the dead-faced, burnt-out businessman. Because they get so little for it. And because the businessman is a fool to let it happen. He has a choice.

Choice becomes the pivotal distinction, the final qualifier. The notion of "making work meaningful" is empty, if not insulting when the worker has little or no choice. Few people would actually want to do most of these jobs. (The cop is an exception, as is the waitress who quit a job as a nurse's aide, despite the higher status, to return to waitressing.) They are, while only intolerable in the case of the coal miner, all physically oppressive. Lasson points out in rare intrusions of commentary that conditions haven't changed much in these trades over the last hundred years. The baker works in 110-degree heat and the miner in cramped and dangerous darkness. The cabbie's environment has probably gotten worse. The bricklayer toils in the same way his grandfather did. Progress may have stepped up productivity, but the actual quality of life on these jobs has remained, for the most part, in stasis. And it also remains that these are not tasks that anyone is likely to want to do. "It's just a job," as the miner says. "Just something common."

There's a pretense, a hypocrisy in avowing that this work should be made "meaningful" which these folk would hoot at. Even more absurd to apply such words to reform on an assembly line. The issue isn't personal fulfillment, it's simply making the common jobs tolerable, directing the genius of a technology at least as much towards the comfort and sanity of workers as towards productivity. The telephone information operator's boredom with a mechanized system which has robbed her of all but the most minimal contact with customers, and her efforts to squeeze interest out of tiny variations such as alternate ways to spell a name, are the closest one comes in this book to the problem of the great masses who do robot work. Yet to de-mechanize the system so she can have more personal contact and variety in her job is not going to make her job significantly more desirable, just more bearable. Reorganizing an auto plant so that workers get to put a whole Vega together rather than turn identical bolts all day isn't going to make their job appealing—particularly after they have put the ten thousandth Vega together—only tolerable. (Such improvements certainly won't make the work "meaningful" or enriching to the soul.) No such reform is going to change the basic unfairness that some people will find their lot in "common" work, and others will be able to choose where to invest their life's labors. The very least measure which could make a dent in that fundamental unfairness would be to give the auto worker a piece of the Vega and the garbage man a share in the

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company, a measure which, one is given to feel after reading Lasson's book, would not be revolutionary, only minimally just.

In other ways this book does stir the revolutionary impulse, however. Several images juxtapose unequal lots vividly: the garbage truck driving up to the empty country club in the early morning, its driver eyeing the undisturbed pool as he hurries to empty the trash bins; the maid leaving the better part of town for home where she buys inferior food to cook for her family, just as she cooked the roast for the family she works for. "She picks out several things for supper, some of which she knows cost Mrs. Peterson less at the Colonial Village Supermarket." More generally, they all *know*, know that they are exploited by the system, that their sparse family economies bear a disproportionate part of the tax burden and receive little in return, know that others profit from their labors. Further, they have, as Ralph Nader points out in his afterword, an intimate knowledge of the more impersonal crimes of the system, specifically of pollution, defective products, and wasteful processes. This knowledge is not accompanied by smoldering revolutionary anger, but it's there, a latent but immensely powerful political force.

Much as I admire him, Nader's contribution, cliche-ridden and windy after Lasson's clean simple prose, is disappointing. He uses words like "victimization" and speaks of the sense of depreciated self-worth and desperation eroding the esprit of the work force—one finds neither in this book. "A first step," he writes, coining an infelicitous slogan, "towards putting the demos back into democracy is accepting the need for professional full-time citizen advocates to represent the interests of the unrepresented." His words sound a little shrill and vapid, not terribly relevant to the individuals Lasson has presented to us. Which is not to say that Nader is irrelevant—just that he isn't at his best with a pen—but that

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there is a built-in limitation, a shallowness, to liberal/social polemic, a tendency to drift off in its own concepts without checking back with reality. Lasson has avoided this by giving us nine characters—not types but individuals and one a downright eccentric—and allowing them to unfold. The result yields no pat answers. The entwined elements of social inequity, the irrevocable human condition, personality, expectations, satisfactions and complaints, and curious anecdotes which have no relation to any issue, do not lend themselves to formulas or point the direction to utopia. But the combination does achieve a profundity, a composition of sharp edges and mystery which is illuminating and well suited to the new concern with quality of work, a far more complex, more elusive issue than child labor or the minimum wage, but one which must soon become a chief concern of the times.

From Builders to Maintenance Crew

Anthony Lewis recently pointed out in *The New York Times* that as unlimited economic growth becomes an untenable ethic—in the face of overpopulation—and civilization strives for a stasis, the injustice of unequal lots takes on a new bite. That X has a smaller piece of the pie than Y, he points out, seems not so terribly unfair when the overall pie, and hence each piece, is growing bigger. Economic growth also generates upward mobility; it is easier to reconcile principles of social justice with the fact that some people are stuck with the nastier chores, if you—and they—have faith that their children will go to college and move up into nicer endeavors. This faith is very important to most of the people in Lasson's book. (The baker states that he doesn't even care whether his son gets a summer job, for instance: "He can learn to relax.") So while, according to the faith, someone will always have to do the "work of civilization," it will always be done by a new set of people, who, having paid their dues, will then ascend as a group into the higher reaches of prosperity. In actuality this hasn't always been true. The same families have been mining coal for generations and the upward mobility of black people, who supposedly had a head start on hoardes of Irish and Italians, has been at best comparable to the mobility of a snail. But the faith has provided a sop to the democratic conscience, which is snatched away when the innate "goodness" of progress becomes discredited. Then society will be faced head on with the feudal nature of the division of labor.

Although the black clouds of disaster on the horizon have not yet curbed our appetite for unabated growth, and we still search desperately for frontiers, we have already reached at least a mental plateau in prosperity. We can no longer talk of building a nation—it is already built: labor can no longer be romanticized as the unlauded but indispensable builder, it is already the maintenance crew. If you recognize that, then the lot of people on that crew becomes a far more unavoidable matter of conscience than it was when you saw them as builders paying their dues, jumping in to take their chances in the land of opportunity; then the quality of life in that crew becomes an issue of primary political importance. Awareness of this issue is already surfacing on the editorial pages of newspapers, in company work-improvement programs, and among younger workers. But the problem has not been recognized as a major challenge to society, as a principal concern of a future which, with its threats and its possibilities, is now very close upon us.

Lasson's book does not deal with this challenge at all, and only incidentally with less sweeping issues such as the heat in which the baker works, or the boredom of the telephone operator. But *The Workers* is an especially valuable contribution towards understanding the challenge, because it brings you into a flesh-and-blood immediacy with these daily lives, which

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draws out the subtleties lost in reform rhetoric and illustrates the inadequacies as well as the follies of the more standard brands of outrage. By simply describing in a vivid and interesting way what it's like in the garbage truck, editing his material according to its relevance to the person rather than to issues, Lasson causes one to reflect in new ways and in far greater depth than the reformist polemic, hidebound by old conceptions, can. Those reflections do not, however, unveil a clear path to utopia. They are contradictory, often lead to moral or logical swamps, bring you flat up against the wall of impractibility, or leave you mocked by your special brand of elitism or utopianism. But they lead at least in the direction of a few basics. Here are a few of my own.

Easing the Lifetime Term

However useful, however hypnotic to us in the Richard Scarry sense, these jobs may be, few people would actively want to hold any of them for more than a short term. They simply are not jobs a person would freely choose. That people have adjusted to them and seem relatively happy doesn't change that, any more than the fact that most women profess satisfaction with their roles makes their subjugation acceptable. Further, already fogged by the involuntary element, the line between the free person and the slave becomes even more blurred by the realization first that the work literally drains many of these people of the will and energy to create a rich off-the-job life, and secondly that they are almost certainly stuck there forever.

When you drive around with the garbage man, his lot doesn't seem that bad—his mind is free, he knows he's doing something useful, and he uses skill in his work. If the more immediate negative aspects—the smell and the danger of the compressing mechanism—prick your conscience, you can see your way to a solution, for most of the discomforts on these jobs are almost surely alterable by technology. (The contrast between sophisticated equipment and efficiency devices, all oriented towards speed and production, and the primitive physical hardships suffered by the human beings who use them emerges strikingly on several occasions in the book.) But however important it is to remedy these drawbacks—one discovers what they are very quickly by getting into that truck—one is still left with the fact that the jobs are not likely choices; one is still left with the vision of the garbage man at 40 facing another 25 years driving that Brockway Husky, however safe and deodorized, down the freeway and into back alleys. In addition to amending the physical drawbacks, one can shorten his hours so he will be less tired and shorten his week so he has significant blocks of time for other interests. But the line between free person and slave would still be blurred by the involuntary element, combined with the lifetime term. Since we can't just abolish

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these jobs, we are probably stuck with the involuntary element. The lifetime term seems the most logical point at which to meet the challenge.

The Really Dirty Work

While none of these jobs could be made more than simply tolerable, and hence all fall into the category of "dirty work," one big distinction among them emerges, at least for me, with absolute clarity. While I would be far from pleased to find myself in any of these people's shoes, I would do almost anything to stay out of the coal mine. There is the dirty work of civilization, and then there is the really dirty work. The darkness and noise of the mine, a complex set of daily dangers, and on top of that the almost inevitable hazard of black lung could perhaps be somewhat alleviated by technology, but it doesn't seem likely that significant improvement is within reach. It's painful that anyone has to spend his life in any of these jobs, and hopefully we will eventually meet the complexities of solving that imbalance, but right now, given the flexibility that prosperity has gained for us, nobody, absolutely nobody, should have to spend his entire life doing something like mining coal.

The only way I can see to reconcile the need for coal with rudimentary social conscience is a job draft in which everybody does the really dirty work for a short time. If 10 acquaintances were marooned on an island, the less skilled might reasonably be allotted the duller work, the drudgery, while the cleverer members concentrated their talents on more complex tasks, but should any two have to accept latrine duty for the full extent of their stay? Or can any two be expected to perform a task necessary for the welfare of the whole group which not only exposes them to immediate danger but will also take an inevitable and cumulative toll on their bodies? Those tasks, it seems clear, should be shouldered equally by everyone. It makes sense to me that of all Lasson's people, Tiso, the miner, is the least questioning of his lot in life. If you find yourself stuck in a coal mine, with no escape in view save old age, then you simply can't afford to flirt with "what might have beens." A draft for all the merely tolerable jobs doesn't seem practicable—though this doesn't preclude the possibility of somehow breaking the life sentences—but for the plainly sub-human work, a draft, or any other way of distributing the burden democratically, is imperative.

Coming back to the book itself, it would be wrong to suggest that it portrays one outrage after another. In fact, these people, reasonably content and at peace with the world, and their adjustment, in a way mock the idealistic urge to "make things better" for them—just a sample of the dilemmas you come up against. In a way one envies them—for the usefulness of what they do, which might be compared with trepidation to one's own chosen work, for the ease with which they apply themselves, for the soothing regularity of their tasks—making hospital corners on the bed, filling all the eclairs. But that's only looking at them as a foil against which to examine one's own life. You can't get very far before being thrown back to the same realization—that you wouldn't want to hold those jobs yourself, that hardly anybody, given a choice, would. The knowledge that some are free to pursue rewarding work because of the service of others in lives of dirty work has probably been gnawing at the human conscience since the dawn of civilization. But because the work is necessary, the situation has always been accepted as inevitable, closed to question. Orwell, a man ahead of his time, said, "This point is worth considering," but he could take it no further than to point out that some of the work actually is not necessary, providing only luxuries. Now progress, with both its advantages and dangers, has brought us to the point where we have to consider all of it.■

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An Unlikely Oracle

a review by Russell Baker

Here is an extraordinary thing. A book by a "military writer," and written in English.* This, I suppose, will insure its oblivion, at least among those who might profit by it—White House and Pentagon types, strategic thinkers. How they despise English! At least as much as those who love it must despise the prospect of reading a book written "by the most respected and controversial military writer of the 20th century," as the jacket blurb calls Liddell Hart. What an iron wreath for such a graceful, delicate, reasonable piece of writing to have to bear through the marketplace.

The term "military writer" suggests Teutonic murk, Clausewitz, drowsy afternoons in the stacks with Admiral Mahan, slow suffocation in a smother of Pentagonian polysyllabics, highbrow horror chatter about "megadeaths," "protective reaction strikes," "hamlet pacification," you-name-it, and the-Pentagon-has-a-brain-bending-euphemism-for-it.

This little book—it is only 80 pages long—is not of the Pentagon, however, nor of Prussia. It was published first in 1944. The barbarity of war, on which we all seem besotted in the present age, has corrupted our language, which is the expression of our thinking, almost to the point of nonsense. But here, in these marvelously calm and lucid paragraphs, we find a civilized mind at grips with questions of war and statecraft and human failing and are shocked to be reminded that these, after all, are the great questions which have always absorbed good men, and that it is honorable to ponder them and, indeed, important.

Liddell Hart died in 1970 at the age of 75. He had served as a British officer in the great butchering that was World War I. He became interested in history and military doctrine; in World War II, both Germans and Russians applied doctrines which he had attempted without much success to propagate in the British army before 1939.

For all this, however, he seems to have remained a prime example of that singular British contribution to Western civilization, the "amateur." The term is difficult to translate into American. It comes from the Latin verb "amo," meaning "love." The British "amateur" was a man who

**Why Don't We Learn From History?* B. H. Liddell Hart. Hawthorn, $3.95.

Russell Baker writes the "Observer" column in The New York Times.

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pursued his specialty out of love for it, a sense that a civilized gentleman should also be capable of mastering complex, difficult subjects and materials.

The British "amateur" was, of course, often a thorough professional, but he instinctively rejected the exclusivity which Americans and continentals cultivated to enhance their identity as experts in the recondite. The decay of the English language in the United States results, in some degree, from the pride we take in our professionalism.

Each profession develops its own jargon, which becomes a private language, comprehensive only to other members of the profession. Colleagues will understand us, we reason; it may be better if outsiders do not. Here, professionalism tends to be exclusive, snobbish, clubby. ("We systems analysts all speak the same language here, fellows.") The ability to speak the language becomes a badge of professionalism.

Conversely, failure to use the club code may suggest a lack of expertise. At a guess—nothing more—I would bet that Liddell Hart's essay will receive scant attention among persons to whom it might speak most trenchantly, because it is not written in the argot of the national-security expert, the strategic thinker, or the military analyst.

The title alone is apt to put off the professional. "Why Don't We Learn from History?" may be explicit enough, but the book would probably have a much wider professional audience if the title were translated into one of the professional jargons, as for example, "Factors in Generalized Shortfall of Experiential Absorption Capability."

Well, why don't we learn from history? Liddell Hart's answer is that we would rather not. History, in his view, is the search for truth, and despite a great deal of lip service paid to truth, we are really not very fond of it, he believes. "Opposition to the truth is inevitable," he writes, "especially if it takes the form of a new idea."

The "prophet"—the person who expresses the truth unreservedly as he sees it—is indispensable to human progress, but his fate is bleak. "The prophets must be stoned; that is their lot and the test of their self-fulfillment."

The task of successfully propagating their vision, he holds, depends on another class of men—leaders. The leaders must be "philosophical strategists, striking a compromise between truth and men's receptivity to it. The prophet's stoning is evidence of his success; "a leader who is stoned, however, may merely prove that he has failed in his function through a deficiency of wisdom or through confusing his function with that of a prophet."

One vaguely discerns the outline of Lyndon B. Johnson in there. Indeed, this all reads as though it were derived from the history of the presidency since World War II, although it was composed in the early 1940s. Liddell Hart's reflections on the draft might have been composed yesterday. Those who love the Army may lament that they were not read and taken to heart before Lyndon Johnson reached hip depth in the Big Muddy.

History, he argues, shows that "the compulsory principle always breaks down in practice." You can *prevent* men from doing something, but you cannot compel them to do something without risking more than can be gained:

> Efficiency springs from enthusiasm—because this alone can develop a dynamic impulse. Enthusiasm is incompatible with compulsion—because it is essentially spontaneous. Compulsion is thus bound to deaden enthusiasm—because it dries up the source. The more an individual, or nation, has been accustomed to freedom, the more deadening will be the effect of a change to compulsion.

Liddell Hart's observation changed his early belief in the value of military conscription. It was inefficient and out of date—"a method that clung,

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like the ivy, to quantitative standards in an age when the trend of warfare was becoming increasingly qualitative. For it sustained the fetish of mere numbers at a time when skill and enthusiasm were becoming ever more necessary for the effective handling of the new weapons."

Moreover, "Every unwilling man is a germ carrier, spreading infection to an extent altogether disproportionate to the value of the service he is forced to contribute."

There was nobody to argue this case, apparently, when the Selective Service System, back in the days of draft-board demonstrations, thought it was having the last laugh by drafting demonstrators to show them who was in charge. Those who won't read *Why Don't We Learn from History?* may be doomed to learn from events.

The reader keeps stumbling over passages in this book that seem to have been written with the benefit of hindsight on American involvement in Southeast Asia. Here, for example, is what Liddell Hart was saying in 1944 about honoring our commitments.

> Civilization is built on the practice of keeping promises. It may not sound a high attainment, but if trust in its observance be shaken the whole structure cracks and sinks. Any constructive effort and all human relations—personal, political, and commercial—depend on being able to depend on promises.

It could be Dean Rusk explaining why we are in Vietnam, until, in the next paragraph, Liddell Hart discusses "the importance of care about making promises."

"It is immoral to make promises that one cannot in practice fulfill," he writes. With approval, he cites Gladstone's definition to Queen Victoria of the guiding principles for British foreign policy in 1869:

> Though Europe never saw England faint away, *we* know at what cost of internal danger to all the institutions of the country she fought her way to the perilous eminence of which she undoubtedly stood in 1815.... Is England so uplifted in strength above every other nation that she can with prudence advertise herself as ready to undertake the general redress of wrongs? Would not the consequences of such professions and promises be either the premature exhaustion of her means, or a collapse in the day of performance?

John Foster Dulles' answer to the first question, in the American context, was yes. President Nixon is now struggling to prevent the answer to the second question from also being yes.

In his discussion of guerrilla warfare, Liddell Hart raises a question which our enemy in Vietnam may come to find awkward. While guerrilla war peculiarly fits the conditions of the modern age, being especially well suited to exploit social discomfort, racial ferment, and nationalistic fervor, he writes, it produces danger of a moral kind.

> The habit of violence takes much deeper root in irregular warfare than it does in regular warfare. In the latter it is counteracted by the habit of obedience to constituted authority, whereas the former makes a virtue of defying authority and violating rules. It becomes very difficult to rebuild a country, and a stable state, on such an undermined foundation.

It would probably be overstating the case to grant Liddell Hart the mantle of "prophet." He did not receive the ultimate accolade of stoning, but in fact ended up receiving honorary degrees in history. In spite of this, he remained a writer of English, and a provocative thinker about subjects that still torment us, and on which we can all use some fresh 1944 provocative thought.

His model of the great soldier was the Duke of Wellington. Let him explain:

> It was because he really understood war that he became so good at securing peace. He was the least militaristic of soldiers and free from the lust of glory. It was because he saw the value of peace that he became so unbeatable in war. For he kept the end in view, instead of falling in love with the means. Unlike Napoleon, he was not infected with the romance of war, which generates illusions and self-deceptions. That was how Napoleon had failed and Wellington prevailed. ■

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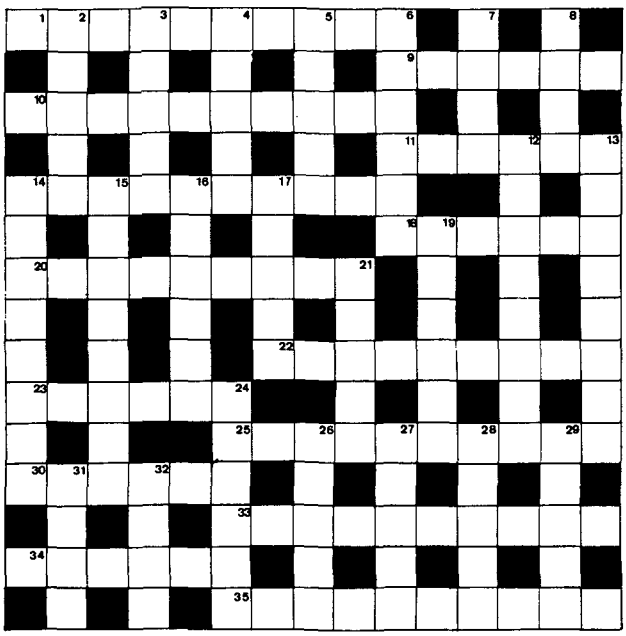
The Political Puzzle

by John Barclay



ACROSS

1. We need a taller crab in the chair. (4, 6)
9. Strangers in the throes of a dilemma. (6)
10. One politician made of forged lard. (6, 4)
11. No hurry to see this lad wed. (6)
14. Uses brain when tea skill is needed. (6, 4)
18. Mistakes are art form in Washington. (6)
20. Bread lines for Congress? (4, 5)
22. Senator wants to see thug shot. (4, 5)
23. Not live, but big in broadcasting industry.
25. New AP press outlets. (10)
30. Hard first name to get down pat? (6)
33. Senate leader in fight v. women's lib? (1, 9)
34. Effect entrance, not tooting horn. (2, 4)
35. Way to gerrymander, or to fight it. (10)

DOWN

2. Help a Hebrew first. (5)
3. Chance for Arlen to get better. (5)
4. These make the well-soled miner. (5)
5. To overact bring Uncle Tom back with ease. (5)
6. Let D.O.D. move its own way. (6)
7. What the cold war needs. (4)
8. Name Russian river after Nat. (4)
12. Latin ode hard to come by in NYC. (4, 4)
13. Starts out to set a name up. (8)
14. Ball chore for Nixon. (5, 3)
15. Latin hoe sometimes heard on stage. (8)
16. What you do with heels or a fuss. (4, 2)
17. These Englishmen won't live up to deal? (5)
19. Not USA, sir. (6)
21. Respirations of dimension? (5)
24. Charm to bring Roman "E" up. (6)
26. For us, a wide ocean is no bar to help. (2, 3)
27. Spots for big contributors. (5)
28. Put Spanish river in publicity beforehand. (5)
29. With this behind, how can you not see circle upset. (5)
31. Fits twice between mother and wink. (4)
32. The measure of a Senator. (4)

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2, 3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word. Answers to last month's puzzle are on page 13.

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From Crusade to Collusion: A Story of Union Decay

a review by James Boyd

To most of us, nothing is more remote than the invisible coal miner, moiling away his murky life a thousand feet underground. Even in his instant of public attention, when a strike vaguely threatens our convenience or a methane explosion traps him below, we are apt to see on our TV not the miner but his various undertakers from the company, the union and the Interior Department, or his benumbed, incoherent widow. If we see the miner at all, he is in extremis, the stupefied survivor just hauled up after days below, blinking against the light and gabbling revivalist hosannas. We are all the losers for this unacquaintance.

Death and the Mines,* an authoritative, absorbing, narrative by Brit Hume, tells the story of the miner and his exploiters in a style befitting that subject—terse, disciplined, yet charged with excitement. Here is a vivid recreation of the mine explosions, the fall of the United Mine Workers, the black-lung movement that suddenly ignited the coal fields, and the hapless but stirring rebellion of Joseph Yablonski and his Miners for Democracy. And when the last body is interred, the last promise broken, the tale ends, leaving the reader to formulate its lessons.

The mere statistics shock, even in this time, when we are steeled to the human costs of industrial profits: 120,000 *officially admitted* deaths from mine accidents since 1839; a current accident death toll that, despite the shrinkage of the mining force to about 100,000, runs at 150 deaths per year (15 were killed in the first 18 working days of 1972); a historic death toll from disease, incalculable but vastly greater than from accidents; a rate of lung damage from pneumoconiosis (black lung) that afflicts half of all career miners. A recent study shows that, per unit of work, the U. S. coal industry has a death rate three times higher than the Russian, four times higher than the English, and six times higher than the German. According to one mining authority, the Germans during World War II—operating their mines with slaves, and under steady bombardment—maintained a better safety record than U. S. mines do today.

The book's value, however, is not in its statistics but in its portrayal of the scheming and collaboration it takes to maintain this steady production of corpses and cripples, uninterrupted by the march of science and civilization. For ages the basic technology of mine safety has been known; for decades much of it has been in force in

**Death and the Mines.* Brit Hume. Grossman, $7.95.

James Boyd is a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly.

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countries poorer than ours. Why not here? Because the expense would cut into profits; life is cheap but safety costs money. Hume portrays a vast industry organizing itself around this priority, persevering through decades, forming collusive alliances wherever needed to block or emasculate safety and health measures.

The pattern is familiar to students of the ways of capitalists and congressmen, but its operation is always fascinating. First, the existence of the subject atrocity is denied authoritatively for 50 years; then its existence is recognized for study purposes only, no regulation allowed; then, in a great landmark, a law is permitted that regulates only the least dangerous catastrophes; a generation later a process begins by which the law is strengthened at one end but weakened at the other by non-enforcement. Properly orchestrated, this strategy can prevail for a hundred years and a million lives. So it did in Coal.

Trumpet to Sweetheart

The battle against safety regulation was only half the war. Miners are tough and durable. By the tens of thousands they survive the accidents and the lung diseases, in a fashion. They linger on, maimed or enfeebled, showing up at state offices for benefits they hear are due them under the workmen's compensation law. If benefits are granted, the industry is disadvantaged, for the higher the number of compensated employees from a particular industry, the higher must be its contribution to the fund. The "malingerers" must be kept off the rolls, and so Coal designed a second campaign against the broken survivors of its first, a campaign that reached out to society at large.

Lawyers abounded who could be hired to confound the stammering miner about his claims. Doctors could always be found to testify that there was no such thing as pneumoconiosis; the suffocating miners, they said, were probably smoking too many cigarettes. State boards routinely turned the miners down for compensation payments. The press kept generally quiet about the whole thing, the disabilities and their non-compensation. The resident clergy diverted the miners with ecclesiastical specialties—snakehandling and babbling in "tongues"—but had no brimstone for the mayhem and robbery daily practiced upon their parishioners. Even the union, now locked in various collusions with the mine operators, refused to champion the miner. By 1970, growing numbers of miners felt as abandoned, alone, and hopeless as ever they did in the dark days before the mighty trumpet of John L. Lewis was heard in Appalachia:

> I shall speak in your name, not in the feeble whisper of a spokesman for mendicants asking for alms, but in the thunderous roar of the captain of a mighty host demanding the justice to which free men are entitled.

With what a sense of fall and loss then, do we read Hume's masterful portrait of the UMW in recent years. The one-time pacesetter in wages and benefits was now the laggard that had not achieved for its members such commonplaces as paid holidays, sick pay, injury pay, lavatories, or even free soap. The rowdy old bullyragger of management was now entwined in secret sweetheart arrangements whereby favored operators need not meet union scale or pay their levy to the welfare fund. The founder of union pensions and free medical care had become notorious for its ingenuity in finding loopholes through which to welsh on them. The wrathful accuser of murder in the mines now joined management and government in calculated silence as the death and disability toll mounted. Yesterday's dynamo among union organizations had decayed to a shell whose rolls carried as many paper locals as real ones. Leadership had shriveled to that most dismal of all imposters—the Cult of the Personality without a personality.

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Goon or Buffoon?

The man who presided over this degeneration, though not the originator of it, was the 11th president of the United Mine Workers—William Anthony "Tony" Boyle. "In contrast to John L.," writes Hume, "whose bushy eyebrows and bulldog jowls were familiar to every miner in the country, Boyle was an obscure figure who had worked in the boss' shadow. He was a diminutive man with sandy hair that had receded exactly halfway back on his head, and a penchant for nattiness that ran to bright shirts and ties and a fresh rose in his lapel each morning." His role is symbolized in his statement following the 1968 Farmington disaster, in which 78 miners perished from a blast in a mine that had been allowed to ignore citations for hundreds of safety violations. "As long as we mine coal, there is always this inherent danger," Boyle said, and lauded the company which owned the mine as "one of the best companies to work with as far as cooperation and safety are concerned."

To show himself a worthy successor to Lewis, Boyle takes to frowning and scowling on the public platform. He speaks with a forced fury, but in non sequiturs, so that the effect is mystification rather than alarm. He spends $117,000 of union funds on photographs of himself and his politburo, so that their unprepossessing likenesses darken every union office and hall. To inject oomph into this appearance at the 1964 UMW convention, a foot-stomping, hour-long ovation was contrived, kept going by five bands, brought in at a cost of $400,000.

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Withal, Boyle never quite "took" with the rank and file. Subversive rumors spread that he was not a miner at all in his youth in Montana, but a sheepherder. And so it was decided that gaudier efforts yet must be made to spruce up his image; he must, like Lewis, become a figure of song and legend. Union hirelings were put to work composing "The Ballad of Tony Boyle" (to be sung to the tune of "The Foggy, Foggy Dew"). It would be rendered unfailingly at union happenings, and thousands of copies were distributed to union locals. A typical verse:

When Tony was a young man, he went underground;
He worked at the miner's trade.
And many, many times the bosses passed the word,
He's a dangerous renegade.

But there was something squalid and unappetizing about the fellow that stifled even staged adulation. In 1968, presidential nominee Hubert Humphrey was endorsed by the UMW and rushed to the union convention to pay homage to Boyle. But faced with the reality of Boyle, even Humphrey seemed suddenly baffled in the search for superlatives. He settled for: "Mr. President—Tony—the one and only Tony Boyle—it is good to be with you. . . . I am mighty glad to rub shoulders with this fellow Tony Boyle. He has been giving me advice and counsel for a long time. . . ."

At first glance, Boyle seems too steeped in buffoonery to be sinister. Not so. Given his policies, there would be need for malevolence, and Boyle would rise to the need.

Hume describes a UMW that has come to see itself as a capitalist, an owner of banking interests, a lender of large sums to coal corporations, a participant in the heady stuff of stabilizing industry profits. This confusion of role risked two consequences: demoralization of the union apparatus and revolt among the workers. Hume shows us how the union hierarchy is kept in line. Salaries of $40,000 are paid to second-echelon functionaries. Lifetime pensions are inaugurated for union officials after only 10 years of service. Relatives of officials are put on the union payroll at salaries three and four times a miner's pay. Expense accounts are encouraged throughout the organization, and are not questioned at headquarters; Secretary-Treasurer John Owens is permitted to run up a hotel bill of $68,000, which the union pays without a flicker. Lower-rung flunkeys are able to pocket as much as $2,000 for attending a convention, after having all their expenses paid. Millions of dollars in such largesse are taken out of the hides of disease-wracked miners. To idealists of the old labor movement, the chosen methods of graft must seem the crowning shame—union men not only lying down with businessmen and congressmen, but imitating their practices.

With the organization thus solidified, suppression of grumbling among the rank and file proceeds. At conventions, real miners are dispensed with when possible, their places taken by bogus freeloaders on the Boyle payroll. When miners do attend, and attempt to protest the official line, they are beaten up, silenced, and outvoted by rigged majorities. Back in the coal fields, protest meetings are broken up by goon squads; bribes are freely offered to disarm doubters; the big lie technique is used to flood the coal fields with vilification of Boyle critics. Opposition candidates for union office are fired and slugged. When, despite all, a large opposition vote is cast, the ballots are stolen or miscounted by the thousands. Finally, the leader of the antis, "Jock" Yablonski, is slain, along with his wife and daughter. Just who hired the assassins is not yet publicly known, but union involvement at some level has been indicated.

The Prancing Anvils

It is a kindness to the great when they do not live long enough to see

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the consequences of their famous victories. John L. Lewis was not to be so spared. In his eighties and failing, he lived long enough to see the degradation of his union, though the mists of age may have mercifully shrouded the realities. He is reported to have said in private of Boyle and his men, "let them sink in their own slime"; but he did not speak publicly against them. Perhaps his uncharacteristic silence stemmed from fathomless frustration at the revenges of a fate that thwarts the best intentions and punishes short cuts.

The Boyle regime is a caricature of Lewis', yet many of its malpractices are imitations and adaptations of things done in the 50-year Lewis monarchy, things done in a primordial time, to meet overwhelming necessities, but done nonetheless, and now institutionalized.

Lewis had used violence, taught violence, to combat the violence of the companies and the paralyzing disunity of the miners, and now his example was used to justify the most pusillanimous acts. He had exalted unity above all as the only salvation of the miners in a world of hostile forces, and he lived to see his old slogans used to suppress militance rather than advance it. He had initiated the fateful collaboration with the owners, to save the failing coal industry from the ruinous competition of oil and gas, and he *did* save it; but cooperation proved insidious, took roots and became a too-comfortable way of life in the union long after its justification had passed. He had permitted the replacement of 300,000 of his miners by advanced machinery, in order to preserve and humanize such jobs as could be supported by a new coal economy, assuming that a growing economy would absorb most displaced miners and that his welfare fund could provide for the rest. But the Eisenhower recessions left the displaced miner no alternative, and impoverished the welfare fund so that it couldn't carry the burden; and instead of humanizing the work underground, the new machines filled the miners' lungs with minute particles of dust that assaulted life more than the rigors and brutalities of old. Even the 10 union hospitals he had brought to the coal fields were, within 10 years, either shut down or in other hands.

Worst of all, his autocracy and the pulverizing strength of his personality had stunted the men around him, leaving the union without effective leadership when he retired. That he might be bold, others were confined to timidity. He used to justify this double standard by paraphrasing an old English verse:

When ye be an anvil, keep thee very still
But when ye be a hammer, strike with all thy will.

When the old man finally stepped down, the anvils arose and pranced about, aping the master in those superficialities within their reach, demanding turns upon his chair, his prerequisites, the fealty paid him, and the preservation of his dictatorial tradition. In his hey-day, Lewis had been wont to anathematize his opponents with biblical allusions; in his last years, as his thoughts turned inward, he must have pondered well the meaning of Ecclesiastes and Job.

Despite the Mines

I draw several uncareful lessons from this careful book: the type of man who normally attains economic power chooses money above the lives of others whenever the two are in conflict; the type of man who normally attains political power places the holding of his job above either lives *or* the profits of others; generally this means the politician will acquiesce in the value choices of the economic barons who are the *proximate* bestowers of his office, but in moments of public unrest, he will desert wealth to appease an aroused public—the *ultimate* bestowers of his job; the public

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at large passively accepts the choice of money above life and leaves its workings undisturbed until some particularly grisly application stirs it to brief protest.

The men of power are in some inner recess ashamed of, or at least uneasy about, their priorities, denying as they do that which we profess to believe as a people; and so, though they will connive against life for a century, in moments of uproar and accusation they become rattled inside and tend to temporarily flee the fort. The hope for reform, then, always depends upon the forces of life being able to mobilize swiftly in the hour of disaster; the hope of its adversaries lies in delay—until an investigation is concluded, or a commission has reported, or a court case has been decided—any pretext for delay that will restore the status quo ante.

Hence, the 1907 mine explosion at Monongah, which killed 307 miners, finally brought the acceptance of the *principle* of federal legislation in respect to mining conditions, but delaying tactics held off that decision until 1910, when a relaxed climate made it possible to dilute the bill into a harmless advisory sop without any powers. After that, a stalemate until 1951, when the West Frankfort catastrophe (119 killed) enabled Lewis to browbeat Congress into a bill which, while relatively unobtrusive, at least *purported* to be a regulatory bill, thus placing the struggle on a new plateau. There followed another 17 years of daily deaths not spectacular enough to force action, until the Farmington disaster of 1968 (which killed only 78, but furnished a dramatic vigil lasting from Thanksgiving to Christmas) unleashed another flood of emotion and guilt. This time, in addition to historical momentum and a confused enemy, the reform forces had on their side skilled legislative technicians and publicists of formidable demagogic talents. The normal ruses of lobbyist bill-drafters and committee chairmen were exposed and circumvented, and strong safety and black-lung bills were passed. (In countries where honor is understood, such exposures as befell Senator Jennings Randolph and Congressman John Dent and the entire West Virginia Senate Conference Committee would have required suicides; here statements of retraction sufficed.)

We are now in another hiatus during which the lobbyists and the Department of Interior are at work sabotaging the legislation through weak enforcement. But momentum is on the side of reform; non-enforcement is bound to lead to still another tragedy and to another public reaction which will restrict still further the margin of maneuver for the owner, the union, the politicians, and the inspectors.

Finally, *Death and the Mines* is a hopeful book for what it reveals about the durability of human decency. As Hume traveled the coal country he was continually impressed with the quality of the cast-off miners. Routinely, he found them to be men of a natural dignity, honesty, and cheerfulness that ill-use seemed unable to extinguish. Poor, they often resist the bribes of Boyle's men. Sick, they drag themselves gasping to the mine to save a day's wage for their family. Terrified in the moment of explosion below, they resolutely grope through the dark in search of a lost comrade. Exposed to the indecencies of life at its margin, many retain a kind of pride that is generally wounded when a union official asks them to falsify a ballot count or rig a meeting.

Yablonski, fearful of rejection by the downtrodden miners and retaliation by their mentor, began his reform campaign against Boyle ever so cautiously. But he found in the character of these hardhats something fine and responsive to justice that emboldened him and caused him to put aside caution and expand his crusade to the limit of his endurance. Perhaps this "catching on" was what killed him. But with such an army waiting, others will come forward to lead.■

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POLITICAL BOOK NOTES

Books scheduled for publication in March.

Almost to the Presidency. Albert Eisele. Piper.
A dual biography of Eugene McCarthy and Hubert Humphrey, in alliance, in personal rivalry, and in ideological battle over the course of liberalism.

American Policy for Peace in the Middle East 1969-1971. Robert J. Pranger. American Enterprise Institute, $3.
A handy catalog of diplomatic events. The difficulty of interpretation drives the author to higher considerations: "If destiny consists, in part, of historical necessity, it still opens future opportunities as well. It is public policy's greatest challenge to enlarge upon such choices as seem possible in given circumstances, rather than to drown in the drift of diffident realities."

The Bear at the Gate: Chinese Policymaking Under Soviet Pressure. Harold C. Hinton. American Enterprise Institute, $3.
A rather scholarly treatment of Chinese foreign policy toward the Soviet Union and the United States since the Sino-Soviet split.

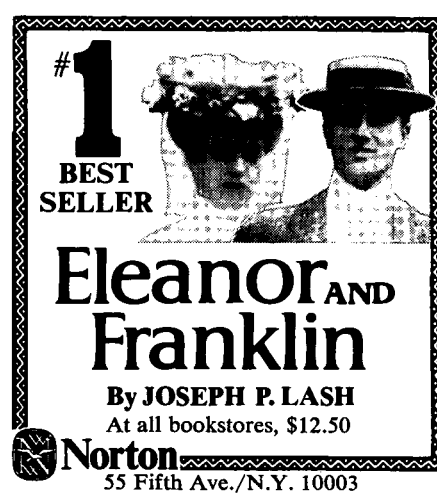
Cable Television: A Guide for Citizen Action. Monroe Price and John Wicklein. Pilgrim Press, $2.95.
A practical, readable manual for those interested in making cable television different from network television.

A Certain Democrat: A Political Biography. William W. Prochnau and Richard W. Larsen. Prentice-Hall, $6.95.
Campaign biography of Scoop Jackson. Climaxes at a Teamsters' rally in 1970, where the crowd actually sings, "You do it big, Henry. This we dig, Henry," to the tune of "Hello, Dolly." The chorus came from "an astonishing assortment of political VIPs. Arnie Weinmeister, burly ex-pro football player and boss of the Teamsters, was elbow to elbow with Norton Clapp, top man of the Weyerhaueser industrial complex, a Republican fat cat. And Brock Adams, the liberal Democratic dove congressman, sang on with Charles O. Carrol, long-time king of King County Republican politicians." Originally entitled *The Last of the Cold War Liberals.*

The Changing Values on Campus. Daniel Yankelovich, Inc. Washington Square Press, $2.95.

China! Inside the People's Republic. Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars. Bantam, $1.50.
A travelog of a one-month tour of China by this anti-war group of Asian scholars, uncritical but interesting. Includes a long interview with Chou En-lai.

Citizen Nader. Charles McCarry. Saturday Review, $7.95.
The first in what promises to be a controversial series of biographies on Ralph Nader. An extraordinary man usually throws contemporary judgment off balance, and that is what Nader has done to McCarry and his sources. There is blind praise, the jealousy of people who think Nader has gotten credit for their efforts, and shrill defensiveness from his targets. McCarry sees that the paranoia of accused corporate officials is often mirrored by an equal paranoia in Nader, and this is perhaps his best critical insight into the man. Other criticisms come off as pot shots, and they have already aroused indignation in the Nader camp. The book is well written at the beginning and the



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end, with pedestrian lapses in-between. On the whole, worth reading.

The Coming to Power: Critical Presidential Elections in American History. ed. by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. McGraw-Hill, $12.50.

Cover Up. Seymour Hersh. Random House, $6.95.
The man who won a Pulitzer Prize for reporting My Lai tells how subsequent officers of the Americal Division, who had no direct involvement with My Lai and its investigation, destroyed evidence to protect the officers who preceded them.

Dead End: The Automobile in Mass Transportation. Ronald A. Buel. Prentice-Hall, $6.95.
Everything bad you ever wanted to know about the automobile, even how it causes nasty weather: "Downtown St. Louis has five more days of thunderstorms a year than a rural area 13 miles upwind with less pollution. . . . "

Declaration of Conscience. Margaret Chase Smith. Doubleday, $6.95.

Elections for Sale. Richard D. McCarthy. Houghton Mifflin, $5.95.
"Max" McCarthy, former congressman, author of *The Ultimate Folly*, and one of the many casualties of the bloody battle for New York's U.S. Senate seat in 1970, writes about the high costs of campaigning that compel a candidate to be rich or to sell out.

The Ethical Investor. John G. Simon, Charles W. Powers, Jon P. Gunnemann. Yale, $9.50, $2.95.
A highly intelligent discussion of the corporate responsibility issue, focusing on corporations, stockholders, and universities. The authors build up ethical guidelines for investment decisions, but they cannot achieve total moral purity for students who benefit from university stockholdings in questionable companies. The authors cite G. B. Shaw's comment about the clergyman who wanted to accept money only from sweet old ladies: "He has only to follow up the income of the sweet ladies to its industrial source, and there he will find Mrs. Warren's profession and the poisonous canned meat and all the rest of it. His own stipend has the same root. He must either share the world's guilt or go to another planet."

An Evening With Richard Nixon. Gore Vidal. Random House, $4.95.
Gore Vidal's wit is at its best in this readable, often funny play. The evening is emceed by George Washington and most of the characters speak with the candor of Hadean shades. The result is often reminiscent of Fields and West, i.e.: "Washington: 'It says here that we'll be doing Mr. Nixon in *depth*.' Kennedy: (drily) 'You won't drown.' " The play may not offer innovative political analysis, but some of the characters are brilliantly drawn, and that in itself is revealing.

Get These Men Out of the Hot Sun. Herbert Mitgang. Arbor House, $6.00.
This novel by the assistant editor of the *Times*' op ed page, forsees the election of an Agnew-David Eisenhower ticket in 1976. The cabinet includes Walt Rostow, Harold Carswell, Joseph Alsop, and Sam Yorty. I. F. Stone is reporting from exile in Canada.

The Imperial Republic: Speculations on the Future, if any, of the Third U.S.A. Gerald W. Johnson. Liveright, $5.95.
Anything that has lasted as long as American imperialism must have something to recommend it, observes the author, who then sets about his task: "to redesign a discredited form of government, imperialism, so that it will work." He seems to mean it.

Impudent Snobs: Agnew vs. the Intellectual Establishment. John R. Coyne, Jr. Arlington, $8.95.

The Issues of Survival. D. F. Fleming. Doubleday, $5.95.

The Kennedy Doctrine. Louise Fitzsimons. Random House, $7.95.
A lucid, thoughtful portrait of Kennedy as cold warrior. The author leaves out most of JFK's counter-tendencies, such as the test-ban treaty, and in that sense this book could be called one-sided. But it's not a condemnation of the man so much as an expose of his ideas and those of the time. Fitzsimons examines both the assumptions behind the Kennedy theories and the logical conclusions to which they lead, the kind of thinking which JFK, the problem solver, the elitist, did not employ. Occasionally the reader sinks into the mud of obvious pieties, but it's never long before he hits the sound rock of original thought, and in the end those thoughts, and the careful analysis bring him to a solid perception of where we now stand in history, and where we have to go. Of the flock of reevaluations now hitting the market, this promises to be one of the best.

The Limits to Growth. William W. Behrens, Dennis L. Meadows, Donella H. Meadows, Jorgen Randers. Universe.
If you can take 300 pages of diagrams, flow charts, graphs, and other rigorous proof of man's predicament, this report is convincing —and gloomy. Inside of 100 years, at our current growth rates—and even accounting for projected declines in population and pollution controls—our whole "world system" will break down.

The McCloskey Challenge. Lou Cannon. Dutton, $6.95.

McGovern: A Biography. Robert Sam Anson. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, $7.95.
An intelligent study of the candidate from South Dakota that, while generally sympathetic, captures the central problem in a

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comparison of Bob Kennedy, "who could drive thousands to a frenzy," and McGovern, "who could lose himself in a crowd of half a dozen."

The Multinationals. Christopher Tugendhat. Random House, $7.95.
The international corporations, based in one country with subsidiaries around the globe, are still another threat to the ability of nations to control their economic destinies. The author, a British M.P., finds them analagous to the Catholic Church of the past. "Kings and emperors frequently felt their positions to be overshadowed by its international organization, its influence on national policies, and its immense buildings and tracts of land."

Muskie of Maine. David Nevin. Random House, $6.95.
A literate journalist who spent much of the past three years following the candidate, has written a book that is a considerable cut above the usual campaign biography.

The Necessary Majority: Middle America and the Urban Crisis. Robert C. Wood. Columbia, $5.95.
A collection of lectures on cities by a former Under Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

No Particular Place to Go: The Making of a Free High School. Steve Bhaerman and Joel Denker. Simon & Schuster, $6.50.

If you have an interest in elections, you need this book.*

NATIONAL PARTY PLATFORMS 1840-1968

Fourth Edition · Compiled by Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson

This valuable reference book includes not only the platforms of the Democratic and Republican parties and their predecessors, but also those of the controversial American Independent Party led by George C. Wallace and Curtis E. LeMay in 1968, the Free Soil Party of 1848, the Greenbacks of 1884, and many others. **The Daily News Journal.* $12.95

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The Populist Manifesto. Jeff Greenfield and Jack Newfield. Praeger, $5.95.
One might expect that these two unlikely populists would do for the little man what Bernstein did for the Panthers, but the book comes off as a good prologue for the next round of populist effort. The authors have a frank and accurate sense of the book's limitations—rushed history, weak spots in economics, and a shallow strategy for how the coalition will come together—so they concentrate on fleshing out populist issues like health, taxes, banks, and utilities, in sharp, compact essays. These provide a good catalog for somewhat familiar outrages. The book as a whole: thin but timely.

Priests in the U. S.: Reflections on a Survey. Andrew M. Greeley. Doubleday, $5.95.

The Right to be Different: Deviance and Enforced Therapy. Nicholas Kittrie. Johns Hopkins, $15, $4.95

The Seniority System in Congress. Barbara Hinckley. Indiana, $1.95.

So Help Me God: Religion and the Presidency, Wilson to Nixon. Robert S. Alley. John Knox, $4.95.
A lot of Durkheim and Garry Wills in this eminently readable discussion of the various Presidents and their spiritual connections. The author concludes that less help is generally a good idea in foreign affairs.

The State of the Cities: The Report of the Commission on the Cities in the 70s. Sen. Fred Harris and Mayor John Lindsay. Praeger, $4.95, $1.95.

The Ticket-Splitters: A New Force in American Politics. Walter DeVries and V. Lance Tarrance. Eerdmans, $2.45.
Everyone knows about the decline in party loyalty. This book says it's even greater than we think, that the polls don't give an accurate picture when they identify only a small percentage of the voters as independents. Far more, who may still describe themselves as Democrat or Republican, are actually ticket-splitters who, largely on the basis of information received from television news, perceive themselves as voting more on the basis of the candidate's ability or personality than his party identification.

Ward Number Six. David Lebedoff. Scribner's, $5.95.
The tribulations of a Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party activist in the 6th ward of Minneapolis, from precinct meetings to the Chicago convention. There are a few nice moments of candid description—moral tirades in the mimeograph room, the dialogues of door-to-door canvassing— buried beneath excruciating details of local political intrigue.

With Justice for Some: An Indictment for the Law. ed. by Bruce Wasserstein and Mark J. Green. Beacon, $12.50.

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